Adult Literacy In Northern Alberta

A Background Report

Alberta

NORTHERN ALBERTA
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

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ADULT LITERACY IN NORTHERN ALBERTA: A BACKGROUND REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is the culmination of two phases in a three-phase review of literacy in northern Alberta by the Northern Alberta Development Council. It will serve as a discussion paper for two workshops to be held in northern Alberta in May 1989, which will form the basis of an NADC position paper on *Adult Literacy in Northern Alberta.*

Included in this paper is a literature review, an analysis of the literacy situation in the north which discusses literacy learners (present and potential), projects and programs, and concludes by identifying eight key northern literacy issues.

Report Highlights

- *In northern Alberta, 16.6% or 27,715 people, have less than Grade 9 education.* In 1988, 2,361 people were enrolled in literacy projects.
- *Men make up 57% of the low-education population and women the remaining 43%.* However, the gender gap is reversed for literacy project enrollment: 56% of all learners are women, 44% are men.
- *The population with less than Grade 9 education tends to be older*: 65% are over 44 years of age. The reverse is true for literacy project enrollment: 91% are under 45 years of age; 47% are under 25.
- *A high proportion of the population with less than Grade 9 is likely to be of native background.* The trend continues for literacy project enrollment, with 44% of all literacy learners being natives.
- *Few literacy learners have no school experience at all*: 62% have less than a Grade 9 education, 4% have a high school diploma or beyond, and the rest fall somewhere in between.
- *Five government departments fund literacy projects in northern Alberta.* They are Alberta Advanced Education, Alberta Career Development and Employment, Canada Employment and Immigration, Indian and Northern Affairs (Canada), and the Canada/Alberta Northern Development Agreement. Secretary of State (Canada) supports literacy related projects.
- *Project strengths* include a flexible, adaptable structure that is generally learner-centred and community-based. This is especially true for volunteer tutor projects.

- Eight key issues affecting northern literacy have been identified:
  - Literacy awareness
  - Targeting literacy learners
  - Learner support
  - Voluntary Tutor Project support
  - Program funding
  - Prevention
  - Illiteracy and natives
  - Innovative approaches

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A Background Report

SECTION I

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the Northern Alberta Development Council has witnessed an increasing interest in adult literacy. Post-secondary institutions, community groups and concerned residents have submitted briefs expressing serious concerns arising from observations that many adults in the northern part of Alberta possess inadequate reading and writing skills.

This concern is also reflected in the findings of other NADC documents. In 1984, the study *Early School Leavers in Northern Alberta* discovered that 50% of northern students who begin Grade 1 do not complete Grade 12. Some remote areas experienced 90% dropout rates. Early school leaving can be a significant contributing factor to illiteracy rates. The *Adult Education and Training in Northern Alberta* (1982) study identified adult literacy and basic skills training as a high priority in addressing educational and training needs of adults. The study entitled *Socio-Economic Overview of Northern Alberta* (1981) also supports the claim that basic adult literacy training is needed.

To become more familiar with the area of adult literacy, the NADC requested that a study be undertaken to review the current state of literacy in northern Alberta. The purpose of this report is consistent with the mandate of the NADC, which is to:

> Investigate, monitor, evaluate, plan and promote practical measures to foster and advance general development in northern Alberta and to advise the government and make recommendations thereon in respect of:
>
> - Social and economic development
> - Development of communities and service delivery
> - Development of government services programs

ORGANIZATION OF REPORT

This report is organized in four sections:

- *Section I* provides an introduction to the project itself, including an outline of the objectives and methodology.
- *Section II* presents an overview of literacy as gleaned from the literature highlighting the key issues such as the definition of illiteracy, measuring illiteracy, and the consequences of illiteracy to society. A discussion of the key literacy players is also included.

- *Section III* outlines the literacy picture in the north and includes subsections on the characteristics of the "statistically illiterate" population, a profile of literacy learners, an inventory of literacy services, and the government funding for literacy programs.
- *Section IV* concludes the report with a summary of the results and a discussion of the northern literacy issues.

OBJECTIVES

This study has four objectives:

- To conduct a thorough literature review on literacy issues and trends
- To provide an overview of literacy and the present situation in northern Alberta
- To identify the characteristics of illiterate adults in northern Alberta
- To complete a thorough review of all programs and practices addressing literacy in northern Alberta

METHODOLOGY

In January 1988, a steering committee was struck. This committee consisted of seven individuals involved with and concerned about literacy in the north:

Barb Heise - Coordinator, Continuing Education and Special Projects, AVC Lesser Slave Lake, Slave Lake

Kim Kopola-Ghostkeeper - Council Member, Northern Alberta Development Council (Paddle Prairie)

Jean McIntyre - Adult Education Coordinator, Keyano College, Fort Chipewyan

Ann Vos - Steering Committee Chairperson, Chinchaga Reading and Writing Project, Keg River

Harold Wynne - Executive Director, North Peace Adult Education Consortium, Peace River

John Fisher - Director, Community Programs, Alberta Advanced Education, Edmonton

Arlene Reid - Project Coordinator, Northern Development Branch, Peace River

The steering committee directed the activities of a three-phase approach to this review.

Phase I

In Phase I, HLA Consultants were contracted to conduct an in-depth look at illiteracy. Six northern communities were selected for study, as well as nine post-secondary institutions. Information from these sources was analyzed and integrated with conceptual literature and statistical reports. Over 200 interviews were conducted with four types of respondents:

- Providers of programs - administrators and coordinators
- Literacy workers - tutors and instructors
- Students of literacy programs
- Community persons - individuals, agencies and organizations concerned with adult literacy

This study resulted in a theoretical and descriptive overview of the nature of literacy.

Phase II

Bonnie Hutchinson Enterprises Inc. conducted a thorough review of 1986 census data from Statistics Canada to describe the characteristics of the northern population and particularly those with less than Grade 9. This definition of illiteracy, that is, those individuals with less than Grade 9, was selected as an operational definition in an attempt to portray the "statistically illiterate population".

As well, a survey was conducted of all the literacy projects and services offered in northern Alberta, including Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes, volunteer tutor projects (VTPs) and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. Information was gathered on personnel, students and funding of each project. Three open-ended questions allowed respondents to discuss the positive factors important to their projects, as well as factors that had negative impacts on their projects. This information resulted in *Adult Literacy in Northern Alberta: A Statistical Overview.*

The results and highlights of both of these documents are contained within this discussion paper.

Phase III

The third phase of this project will follow the two workshops scheduled for May 1989 in the northwest and northeast regions of the province. Input will be collected and strategies identified to address the key issues of literacy affecting northerners. This report will serve as a discussion paper for participants. The results of the workshops and the issues identified will form the basis of a Northern Alberta Development Council *Position Paper* on *Adult Literacy in Northern Alberta.*

STUDY LIMITATIONS

The reader should be aware of some limitations of the research:

- For the purposes of the statistical overview, the operational definition of illiteracy selected was that of grade level attainment, i.e., individuals with less than Grade 9 were defined as "statistically illiterate".
- 1986 Census data were used for the majority of charts and tables. Educational attainment (i.e. Grade 9) is only compared with sex and age by Statistics Canada. The information here is an attempt to show a *trend* or *relationship* among education and other variables, such as mother tongue, ethnic origin, household income, and so on, *not* a cause. The relationships among these variables are to be interpreted with caution and should be considered descriptive.
- Statistics Canada was unable to fully enumerate some Indian Reserves and settlements, so data on those communities are not available. In northern Alberta, communities not enumerated include:
    - Beaver Lake
    - Cold Lake
    - Heart Lake
    - Whitefish Lake

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SECTION II

OVERVIEW OF LITERACY

OVERVIEW OF LITERACY

Literacy and illiteracy are receiving much attention recently. Provincial, national and international initiatives are taking place at all levels of government to try to address the concerns of the illiterate adult.

Illiteracy generally refers to the inability of an individual to read or write although, as will be discussed later, the actual definition of literacy is mired in controversy. It used to be that illiteracy was seen as being a problem only in third world developing countries - not in places like Canada. However, those working in and caring about the problem of illiteracy know that the problem is real and pervasive.

The issues surrounding illiteracy are many:

- How do you define illiteracy? By skill level? By education level? By functional level?
- How many people are illiterate? And by what definition? Is there a problem?
- What are the consequences of illiteracy? To the individual? To society?
- Who is trying to address these issues?

This section will provide an overview of the issues as gleaned from a review of the literature and review of those involved in the literacy field.

KEY ISSUES

DEFINING ILLITERACY

How to define illiteracy is a major difficulty and one that is highly controversial. Much has been written about this problem, yet there is no commonly accepted definition of adult literacy[1]. The numerous definitions found in the literature can be grouped into two general headings:

1. Absolute definitions
2. Relative definitions

Absolute Definitions

Absolute definitions have traditionally relied on quantitative data based on educational achievement both to define literacy and to identify illiteracy. The following definition is an example:

> Statistical Definition: "A person is literate who has completed X number or more years of formal training."

In Canada, viewing literacy in terms of educational achievement has, until recently, been used most often. Proponents of this approach usually recognize two categories of illiterates:[2]

> A "basic" illiterate possesses few or no reading, writing and numeracy skills.
>
> A "functional" illiterate has some skills but is unable to apply them in his or her social or working environment.

In the 1970s, the standard for functional literacy was established as Grade 9 by UNESCO and many countries followed suit; basic literacy referred to anyone with less than Grade 5 education.[3] Grade 9 is also the statistical base for functional literacy used by Statistics Canada.

This view of literacy is appealing because of its simplicity. It is clear, understandable and measurable.[4] It is relatively easy to identify persons requiring literacy development, to determine gaps between needs and services and to create a picture of illiteracy which can be understood by significant publics. However, its weaknesses are many:[5]

- It includes those with less than Grade 9 who function quite well.
- It excludes those with more than Grade 9 who function poorly.
- It assumes Grade 9 is the appropriate level for full societal involvement.
- It assumes that everyone with Grade 9 has comparable skills and does not take into account the varying requirements for Grade 9 geographically or over time.[6]
- It doesn't take into account that skills change over time, depending on the amount of reading or writing an individual does.

A recent document that has significantly raised the profile of illiteracy in Canada is the report commissioned by Southam News in 1987, *Literacy in Canada: A Research Report* by the Creative Research Group. The Southam study produced some startling, albeit controversial, findings, many of which will be dealt with later. One significant finding, however, exemplifies the weakness with the statistical definition. Southam used a practical test to determine literacy levels. The researchers identified two groups not accounted for in the grade criterion definition. The first is termed the "false literates" which are those individuals who have achieved Grade 9 but do not perform literacy tasks at the level which corresponds to that grade.[7]

> Even among university graduates, there is an eight percent incidence of illiteracy. Further, 54% of all illiterates have at least some secondary schooling, one-third are high school graduates.

The second group is referred to as the "false illiterates" which includes those persons who do not possess the level of education considered necessary for literacy (Grade 9) yet demonstrate success at performing literacy tasks. By Southam's criteria, 28% of adults with less than Grade 5 and almost one-half (47%) with Grades 5 to 8 are literate.

The statistical definition of literacy was selected by Hutchinson in *Adult Literacy in Northern Alberta: A Statistical Overview* in order to get an *indication* of illiteracy levels. Those identified with less than Grade 9 were called "statistically illiterate" as opposed to functional illiterates, since the Grade 9 cut-off does not indicate the level of functioning in society.

Relative Definitions

Relative definitions of literacy focus on two dimensions: the individual and his/her context or environment. They suggest that literacy is defined by the dynamic interplay between the demands of society and the purposes for which a person wishes to use literacy. This implies that there is no absolute universal point at which illiteracy ends and literacy begins. It also suggests that literacy skills considered adequate at one time in life are not necessarily sufficient or the same as those required if needs change. In addition, these definitions recognize that the needs and demands of society and the individual are not static. Proponents of these types of definitions, like those who employ statistical definitions, often use the terms "basic" and "functional" to indicate levels of literacy. They do not, however, equate levels to grade achievement, but rather define them in relation to skills needed for achieving goals and within a particular context or environment.

The following is an example of a relative definition:

> A person is literate who has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which enable the engagement in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning in a group or community and whose attainments in reading, writing and arithmetic make it possible to continue to use these skills toward personal and community development.[8]

The definition is twofold:

- An illiterate is someone without the necessary functional literacy skills.
- The necessary functional literacy skills are determined by the individual in interaction with his or her environment.

The strength of the relative definition is that it answers the difficulties of the educational definition:

- It acknowledges that grade level achieved may have nothing to do with literacy skills desired.
- It allows that necessary literacy skills not only vary from individual to individual and environment to environment, but also within a single life as personal desires and external demands change.
- Finally, it admits that we can draw no certain conclusions from an education system that is not always appropriate, adequate or uniform.

While the relative definition is the most widely used and tends to be the most satisfactory, it also has its weaknesses.

- It is not quantifiable, so does not allow for the identification of an illiterate population.
- It is open-ended, so does not provide for a cut-off point.

Literacy is not a concrete object which can be defined by its properties and substances. Indeed, what comprises literacy depends greatly on one's viewpoint or perspective. Therefore, it is important to comprehend the *range* of literacy perspectives held by people.

The various perspectives can be placed on a continuum. One end of the continuum represents ***absolute*** views of literacy while the other represents ***relative*** views.[9]

ABSOLUTE VIEWS <——————————————————> RELATIVE VIEWS

The following overview briefly describes the primary characteristics of both sets of perspectives. As other perspectives tend to fall along the continuum path, they are not discussed in order to emphasize the distinctions between the two end perspectives.

Defining literacy...

From the ABSOLUTE PERSPECTIVE From the RELATIVE PERSPECTIVE

<———————————————————————————————————————>

(<continuum>)

Literacy is viewed as:

- a *specific level* of reading/writing skills. This is usually expressed in statistical terms, e.g., Grade 9.
- a *specific type* of knowledge and skill, e.g., being able to read a particular piece of literature
- *one type and level* of reading/writing which is *appropriate to all adults* and *serves all purposes* adults have for literacy
- *an end* in itself; it is finite and *unchanging*. Once a particular level/type of literacy is acquired, the individual is considered literate for all circumstances and purposes.

Literacy is viewed as:

- *multiple levels* of reading/writing skill. This level is determined by the individual's goals and circumstances.
- *different types* of knowledge/skill depending on the needs of the individual in his/her particular situation
- a *type and level* of reading which is *appropriate* to the *individual's purpose* for literacy
- *a tool* for serving the diversity of purposes individual adults have for literacy. As the individual's purpose for literacy changes, so do the *types and levels* of literacy need *change*.

It is clear that the definition issue will not be easy to resolve. Some researchers say it will never be resolved. The two perspectives can serve different purposes; the absolute definition is useful for identifying, describing and analyzing the illiterate *population*, whereas the relative definition is useful when dealing with and understanding the *individual*.

MEASURING ILLITERACY

How pervasive is the problem of illiteracy? The absolute definition of literacy can easily determine how many people have less than Grade 9 (functional illiterate) and less than Grade 5 (basic illiterate). Using that definition,[10] in 1981 UNESCO determined that Canada had:

Basic Illiterates (less than Grade 5)	1 MILLION
Functional Illiterates (Grade 5 - Grade 9)	3 MILLION
Total (less than Grade 9)	4 MILLION

The Southam Study chose a functional definition:

> Literacy is the ability to use printed and written information to function in society.

Southam conducted face-to-face surveys with 2,398 adults in 148 Canadian communities.[11] The average interview took 80 minutes and involved two parts: a background and activity questionnaire, followed by a test of reading, writing and numbers skills using 40 items based on everyday life. Some of the items included:

- Read and understand the right dosage from a bottle of cough syrup (10% of adult Canadians can't do this).
- From six road signs, pick out which one warns of a traffic light ahead (13% can't).
- Calculate the change from a restaurant bill (33% can't).
- Circle the long distance charges on a telephone bill (29% can't).
- Find a store in the yellow pages (50% can't).

Although there is some dispute over whether the 40 items selected by Southam are necessary skills for everyday life, certainly the Southam Study was a landmark in attempting to identify illiterate people based on skill level rather than education level. The results of the survey reveal some startling finds.[12]

- Illiteracy rates increase from west to east, with a low of 17% in B.C. to a high of 44% in Newfoundland. (Alberta had a rate of 21%.)
- Half of the "illiterates" say they went to high school and one-third say they graduated. One in 12 who claimed to be university graduates still tested as functionally illiterate.
- In the eight centres across Canada, Edmonton had the second worst rate with 33% functionally illiterates.

In comparing these results with UNESCO's, Southam identified Canadian adults to be:

Basic Illiterates	1.5 MILLION
Functional Illiterates	3 MILLION
Total	4.5 MILLION

It must be noted that Southam researchers estimate they did not reach at least 500,000 more illiterate adults among unsurveyed groups of prisoners, transients, the mentally retarded, natives on reserves, people living north of the 60th parallel and all immigrants unable to speak either official language.[13]

The two totals, UNESCO - 4.0 million, and Southam - 4.5 million, are not significantly different. But what *is* significantly different is that Southam identified 1.7 million Canadians with less than Grade 9 who were *literate* and 2.4 million with Grade 9 or higher who proved to be *functionally illiterate.*

Clearly illiteracy is pervasive and permeates all education levels.

APPROACH TO ILLITERACY

How does one become literate? There is considerable disagreement over the whole approach to teaching literacy, some issues being: paid teachers versus volunteer tutors, community approach versus national approach, and using phonics versus "whole language".[14]

This conflict in approach stems from a conflict in philosophy: LITERACY versus literacy, or big-L versus small-l literacy. The difference between these two is the level of empowerment. Some feel the purpose of literacy is to empower, hence big-L LITERACY. "They see the illiterate person as the underdog and they see literacy as a tool for social justice or equal rights."[15] Big-L literacy is used as "a remedy for poverty, unemployment, disease and hopelessness".[16]

The little-l literacy advocates see literacy as an end in itself rather than a means to an end. Audrey Thomas, in *Broken Words*, points out that:[17]

> Simple, small-l literacy is empowerment enough for many illiterates. "They don't want to lead a revolution - they just want to be part of the mainstream."

Literacy is a complex area and its interaction with other social issues and problems is not clear. For example, "there is evidence that literacy does not necessarily lead to economic development, though it does tend to accompany such development."[18]

Research on the big-L and small-l controversy indicates that either approach can be successful, depending on the individual needs of the learner.[19]

CONSEQUENCES OF ILLITERACY

There are illiterate people who are not adversely affected by the inability to read and write. They are those whose lifestyles and occupations require few literacy skills. If they formed the bulk of the population, then illiteracy might not pose much of a problem. But these people are becoming fewer in number. The social, economic and political life of society is controlled and propelled by literate means. Illiteracy is a problem for illiterate individuals and for the communities in which they live.

Illiteracy as an Individual Disability

Illiteracy is an obstacle that prevents some people from doing what they want to do at an equal level with others in the community. It limits their access to available opportunities. While some cope with the disability by tailoring their goals to accommodate their limitations, the real desires often remain.

As a disability, illiteracy poses four basic difficulties:

- Psychologically, the disability is evidenced by an overall lack of self-esteem, or confidence, that affects many aspects of the illiterate person's life and often hinders the learning process, especially at the beginning.
- Socially, the disability may limit the full enjoyment of family and friends. The person may be dependent on a more literate spouse, or unable to assist children with homework. Outside the family, the person often struggles to hide the disability from others. Pleasurable activities that involve literacy skills are avoided.
- Economically, the disability affects the worker and the consumer. Employment opportunities are often limited to low-paying jobs. Within the work place, the illiterate person may make costly and dangerous mistakes due to an inability to read instructions. As consumers, illiterate people often encounter difficulties comparison shopping, understanding labels, and benefiting from important information on consumer safety.
- Politically, the disability can mean inactivity in community affairs, a general ignorance of major issues and a lack of awareness of one's own rights. Non-participation ranges from not voting, to not running for office. In a democracy, many illiterate people are, in a sense, disenfranchised.

In a society dominated by print, it is hard to imagine not being able to read and write. Yet many do get by with limited literacy skills and without the disability being identified by colleagues, neighbors, family and friends. Illiteracy is a serious problem because it is so often hidden, so often unrecognized and so often ignored.

Illiteracy as a Community Issue

If illiteracy is an individual issue, it is also a community issue. The literacy level of any community is determined by the literacy level of those who live in it. A thriving community cannot afford illiteracy. Survival may depend on participating in the fast-paced world of complicated technology and the not-so-simple printed word.

As a community issue, illiteracy reflects the four basic difficulties of the individual disability:

- Psychologically, the morale of the entire community will be impaired if many of its members experience the low self-esteem common to illiterate individuals. Negative feelings, coupled with a sense of powerlessness, may inhibit the growth of the community.
- Socially, the desire for self-protection and tendency of illiterate people to depend upon a selected few could result in a community with insufficient bonds holding it together. Community leaders may encounter difficulties planning and executing new initiatives. Recreational, social and cultural services will likely be limited, though the demand for such services may also be small.
- Economically, communities with high illiteracy rates will experience difficulties maintaining a skilled work force. The industrial base may be limited to one or two low skill areas. Economic development could then mean looking elsewhere to fill labor needs, a solution which would have an adverse affect on unemployed long-term residents. Yet, without expansion and some diversification, the economic health of the community will suffer.
- Politically, a high degree of non-participation on the part of illiterate people will result in an imbalance of power within the community itself and even between the community and other levels of government. When certain people - including possible leaders - are excluded from the political process, the political life of the entire community is weakened and its claim to democracy challenged.

Illiteracy is an issue for all communities, including those with low illiteracy rates. There are many benefits to be gained by communities if they invest in services to reduce illiteracy.

Illiteracy as a Dynamic Problem

The literacy needs of individuals may change dramatically during the course of a lifetime. The same is true of communities. Literacy skills that are appropriate in one situation may be inadequate in another.

Changes that result in increased literacy needs are many.

- Starting a family may give rise to new literacy needs such as reading to young ones or helping older children with homework.
- The death of a spouse may force a previously dependent partner to assume greater responsibilities in the area of household finances and management.
- A sudden job loss could mean a change in occupation and a need for upgrading. Within the same job, a new system, a new computer or even a new boss can mean a new need for literacy.
- The economic base of the community may shift from low literacy employment to highly skilled positions that require literacy. The labor market must reflect that change.
- Over time, the population and/or lifestyle of a community can swing from being a predominantly illiterate to a literate one. The change may be gradual, but its effects can appear quite suddenly. People who were previously an integral part of the community, or whose families were community leaders, may find they need to become literate to maintain their position or even to maintain a sense of belonging.

While the demand for literacy can arise out of a situation where there was once no demand, specific needs can also change. When planning and implementing literacy programs, care must be taken to respond appropriately. This is especially true in the north, where economic, employment and social changes over the past few years have left no area untouched. Recent developments in the forestry sector too are playing a major role in the lives of northerners. The economic future is changing dramatically and those lacking in literacy skills will be left further behind.

KEY ROLES

Attempts to address the problem of illiteracy are varied and involve a wide range of people, programs and governments. The key players include four main groups:

- The literacy learners
- The literacy providers
- The literacy funders
- The literacy supporters

LITERACY LEARNERS

The most important literacy role is the learner - both present and potential. The literature provides information on the types of learners that take literacy programs. The Alberta Career Development and Employment paper *Literacy and Illiteracy: An Overview of the Issues* capsulizes the four groups of learners identified in the studies.[20]

> Group I: "Secure and Self-Directed"
> Economically and personally secure, these people are the most easily recruited of those in need of literacy training. They recognize the benefits of literacy, and welcome the opportunity to improve their reading and writing abilities.
>
> Group II: "Time Problems"
> Unlike Group I users, people in this group are eager to learn but are less secure economically and physically. They require flexible programs as they often work irregular hours and may be constrained by family responsibilities. Often undereducated and underemployed, they respond well to programs that take their time constraints into account.
>
> Group III: "One-To-One"
> Potential learners in this group require extensive upgrading, and are considerably more difficult to recruit into literacy programs. Nonetheless, a personalized approach to both recruitment and training can ensure that this group benefits from literacy services.

> Group IV: "The Stationary Poor"
> This group includes those most in need of help. These people are the least likely to seek help or to benefit from help that is offered because they usually lack the positive attitude to learning that is seen as the key to success. They represent the greatest challenge to literacy providers as they are generally seen as inaccessible.

Different learners have different needs. Effective literacy programs take into account the different and unique requirements of the students.

To understand "potential" learners is to understand the profile of the typical illiterate person. Traditionally, specific groups within our society have been thought of as having high rates of illiteracy: the uneducated, the non-English speaking immigrant, the older adult, the learning disabled and the poor. The Southam Study identified a profile based on a Canada-wide survey:[21]

- Male (53.5% versus 46.5% female)
- Some high school (more than 50%; 17% have grade 12)
- Employed (86% had full or part-time jobs in the last year)
- Older (30% over 65)
- Poorer (literates report 44% higher income)

Southam goes on to conclude that:[22]

> Overall, illiterates emerge as operating in the mainstream society but are not really part of it. They're trapped in dead end jobs. But only one in five illiterates admits reading and writing are holding them back in their job and only 10% said they might ever take remedial education to improve their skills.

In Canada, fewer than 2% of those identified as illiterate requiring literacy training are actually enrolled in a program.[23] Appendix A charts the number of individuals taking literacy courses by province.

Alberta is the leader across the country in providing training to a high of 5% of illiterate people, far surpassing the average 1% or 2% in the other provinces.

LITERACY PROVIDERS

In Alberta, literacy training is provided by:

- Alberta Vocational Centres
- Community Colleges
- Educational Consortia
- Further Education Councils
- Public Libraries

People seeking literacy generally have two types of programs from which to choose. They may enroll in full-time adult basic education classes or receive tutoring, usually for several hours a week, through a volunteer tutor project. The choice depends upon such factors as employment and family demands, financing, and availability of programs.[24]

Adult Basic Education

Adult Basic Education (ABE) is the literacy component (grades 0 - 9) of the academic upgrading programs (0 - 12) offered by post-secondary institutions. ABE classes tend to follow a curriculum reflective of the school system. Flexibility is nonetheless present, with life skills classes, personal and career counseling available to students requesting such services.

ABE providers include administrators and instructors. Administ ators can be responsible for the entire academic upgrading program. They may or may not be specialized in ABE. Similarly, instructors may teach ABE classes only, or may be required to teach all levels of academic upgrading. While some administrators do not teach at all, others are really instructors with administrative responsibilities appended to a reduced teaching workload.

Volunteer Tutor Projects

Volunteer tutor projects (VTPs) offer one-to-one tutoring. There is no set curriculum and grade levels are generally put aside when determining eligibility and placement. Programs are individually designed to meet the goals and objectives of each learner. There are no group classes.

VTP providers include coordinators and tutors. Coordinators are responsible for administering the programs, recruiting learners and tutors, matching learners with tutors and monitoring the matches. In most cases, the tutors are all volunteers. Some projects, such as Fort Vermilion and Meander River, use paid tutors.

VTP coordinators and tutors come from all walks of life, though coordinators are likely to have some adult education experience. Opportunities for professional development strengthen the expertise of coordinators while ongoing training and support assist tutors in enhancing their own abilities.

English as a Second Language

English as a Second Language (ESL) classes are for those whose first language is not English. The classes are offered either in a classroom setting or through individual instruction.

LITERACY FUNDERS

Although private institutions, service clubs, and community groups have all provided financial support to literacy programs, literacy dollars are primarily government dollars. Assistance to literacy comes from both provincial and federal levels of government.

The bulk of provincial money is channelled through three main departments: Alberta Advanced Education, Alberta Education, and Alberta Career Development and Employment.[25]

Alberta Advanced Education

Programs for adult upgrading are provided through Alberta Advanced Education through the Alberta Vocational Centres. Some funding is also provided to colleges and consortia for upgrading and basic education. Through its Further Education Grant Program, money is also available to Further Education Councils. Some funds are provided for literacy training of adult offenders in custody in provincial correctional centers.

Alberta Education

Alberta Education financially supports Adult Basic Education (ABE) and adult upgrading through the school system. Some money is also provided for the literacy training of young offenders through the regular grade-school instructional process.

Alberta Career Development and Employment

Through its Alberta Vocational Training Program (AVT), Alberta Career Development and Employment provides funding for academic upgrading. This includes both student and program support.

Federal Government

Although the provinces have the responsibility for education, the federal government is involved in literacy in numerous ways. The Alberta Career Development and Employment paper *Literacy in Alberta: Roles and Responsibilities* summarizes the key federal initiatives:

- **Department of Secretary of State** - support for community-based literacy initiatives. The *National Literacy Secretariat* was created in 1987 as a new department.
- **Employment and Immigration Canada** - funding for job readiness
- **Solicitor General of Canada** - campaign to promote literacy training in the federal prison system
- **Indian and Northern Affairs** - funding provided to bands for literacy training

A variety of grants and cost-sharing agreements between the federal and provincial governments are also in place.

The criteria governing funding for programs as well as financial assistance to learners are discussed in greater depth later in this report. Detailed information on each department is provided in the appendix. The government structures necessary to address the problem of illiteracy are, for the most part, firmly in place.

LITERACY SUPPORTERS

There are many professional organizations, both provincially and nationally, supporting and assisting the literacy cause.[26]

The Alberta Association for Adult Literacy (AAAL) was formed in 1979 as a coordinating body for agencies, individuals and groups in the area of literacy. AAAL produces a quarterly newsletter, sponsors a conference annually and serves as a resource base for literacy material.

The Literacy Coordinators of Alberta (LCA) is an organization whose members include coordinators of literacy tutor projects. "The LCA usually meets twice a year, and is intended to provide assistance to members on matters of program development."[27]

On a national level, a number of groups have demonstrated a commitment to literacy. A key organization is the Movement for Canadian Literacy (MCL). Established in 1977, the purpose of MCL is "to provide a non-governmental umbrella organization for those interested and working in literacy at the national, provincial, regional or local level".[28]

Laubach Literacy of Canada is another key national group. Laubach developed its own approach to teaching literacy, relying heavily on the use of volunteers.

In 1985, the Canadian Business Task Force on Literacy was struck. This group studied and attempted to calculate the cost of illiteracy to the country. *Measuring the Cost of Illiteracy in Canada* produced some astounding figures:

- Illiteracy costs an estimated $4 billion annually to Canadian businesses.
- Illiteracy costs an estimated $10 billion annually to Canadian society as a whole.

The costs of illiteracy were estimated on such items as industrial accidents ($1.6 billion), lost productivity ($2.5 billion), direct training ($.05 billion), lost earnings ($8.8 billion) and unemployment ($.17 billion).

At an international level, United Nations has proclaimed 1990 as International Literacy Year. Many groups and organizations are preparing for this event.

SUMMARY

This overview of literacy and illiteracy presents many issues and challenges. By any definition, illiteracy is a pervasive problem that prevents millions of people from participating to their fullest potential. Clearly, literacy provides useful skills and is a value in our society that is desirable and should be sought after.

LITERACY IN NORTHERN ALBERTA

In an effort to get a picture and understanding of the current situation of literacy in northern Alberta, Bonnie Hutchinson Enterprises, in her report *Adult Literacy in Northern Alberta: A Statistical Overview* utilized a number of sources.[29]

Those findings make up the majority of this section.

Canada Census Data

Data from the 1986 Canada Census were compiled and analyzed to identify the illiterate population of northern Alberta and to target potential learners by identifying characteristics of illiterate people. Information for the north, the seven sub-regions and Alberta as a whole was compiled and compared. The Grade 9 indicator was used to identify the illiterate population and characteristics of illiterate people.

Telephone Survey

A survey of literacy projects in northern Alberta was conducted to determine the characteristics of present learners, the types of services available and the demands placed on those services. A total of 46 projects, involving 77 learning centres and small communities, were contacted (see Appendix B).

Interviews

Government departments were contacted to obtain information on literacy programs including funding information, types of programs, numbers of students served, dollars spent and the overall demand for literacy services.

To better understand the variations of needs and services in the north, the Northern Alberta Development Council area was broken down into seven regions as identified on the following map. The regions were selected keeping in mind the areas of the educational institutions, the boundaries of Further Education Councils, the trading area and the natural movement of the population (See the appendix for a map of the Further Education Council boundaries).

ADULT LITERACY IN NORTHERN ALBERTA:

A Background Report

SECTION III

LITERACY IN NORTHERN ALBERTA

LITERACY IN NORTHERN ALBERTA

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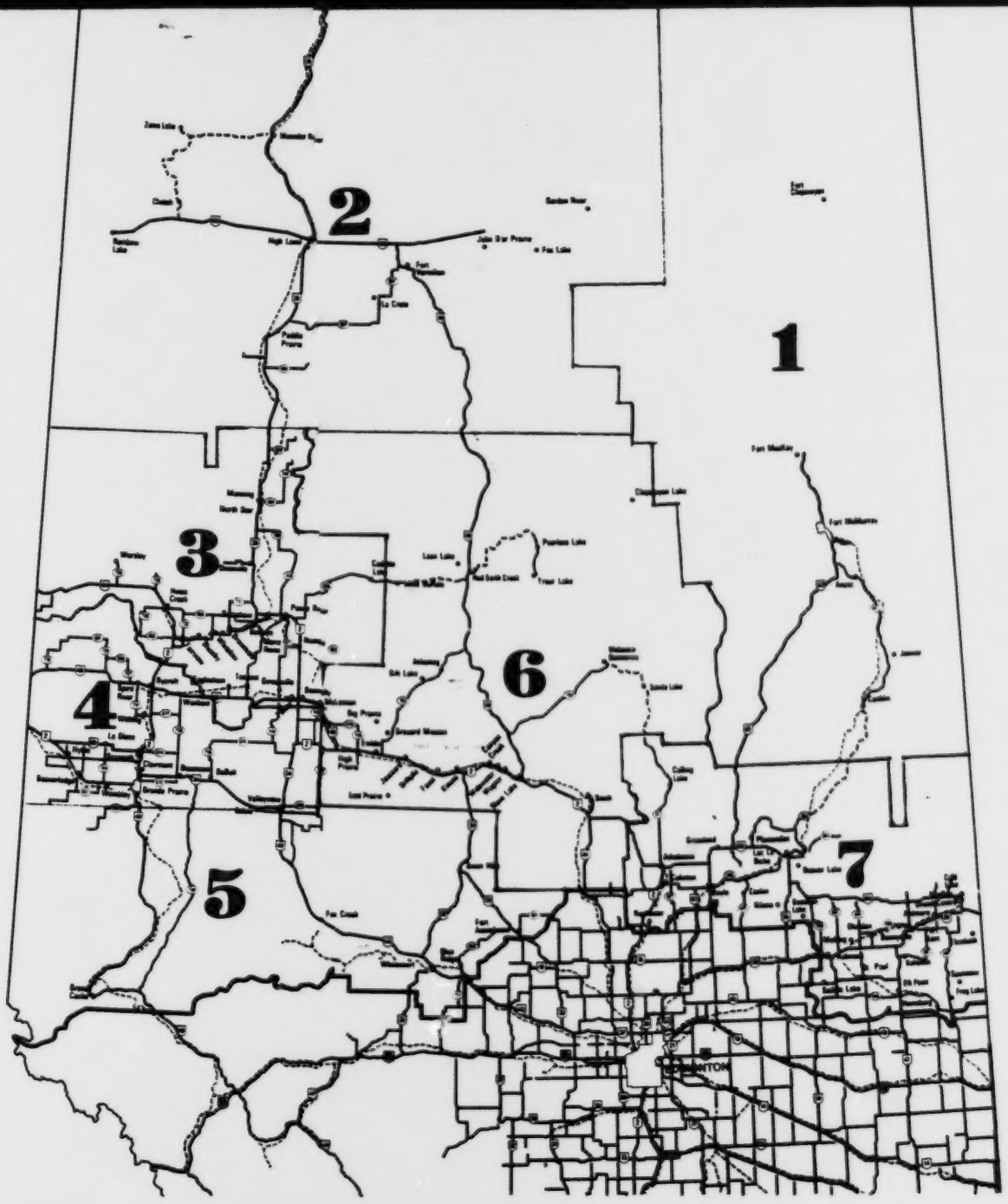
Telephone Survey

A survey of literacy projects in northern Alberta was conducted to determine the characteristics of present learners, the types of services available and the demands placed on those services. A total of 44 projects, representing 33 communities, were contacted.

Interviews

Government departments were contacted to obtain information on literacy programs including funding information, types of programs, numbers of students served, dollars spent and the overall demand for literacy services.

To better understand the variations of needs and services in the north, the Northern Alberta Development Council area was broken down into seven regions as identified on the following map. The regions were selected keeping in mind the areas of the educational institutions, the boundaries of Further Education Councils, the trading area and the natural movement of the population (See the appendix for a map of the Further Education Council boundaries).



Regional Boundaries for Adult Literacy
in Northern Alberta

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE "STATISTICALLY ILLITERATE" POPULATION

OVERVIEW OF MAIN POINTS

Canada Census Data for 1986 were used to identify and analyze information about northern Alberta residents with less than Grade 9 education. Some interesting statistics were revealed.

- 27,715 northern Albertans over the age of 15 have less than a Grade 9 education. They are the "statistical illiterates." (Please note the limitations of this statistical definition discussed in the introduction section.)
- The percentage of northern Alberta residents with less than Grade 9 education is 16.5%; the percentage for Alberta is 10.8%.
- Although northerners make up only 9% of Alberta's adult population, northern residents make up 14% of Alberta's population with less than Grade 9.
- Men make up 57% of the northern population with less than Grade 9, and women the remaining 43%. Eighteen percent of all northern males have less than Grade 9 education, compared to 14.8% of all the females.
- Most of those with less than Grade 9 are either over 65 (27%) or between the ages of 45-64 (38%). Throughout the province, people with less education tend to be older; the same is true for the rest of the country. However, compared to the rest of Alberta, northern Alberta has more younger people with less than Grade 9 education (9% in the 15-24 age group, compared to 4% for Alberta).
- Low education rates are highest in areas with high numbers of aboriginal language speakers and lowest in regions with the highest numbers of English-as-a-first-language speakers.
- Household income levels tend to be lowest in areas with the highest proportion of people with less than Grade 9 education.

- The Fort McMurray/Fort Chipewyan area has the lowest proportion of people with less than Grade 9 (7.3%) while the High Level/Fort Vermilion region has the highest (38.5%). Interestingly, High Level/Fort Vermilion has one of the lowest unemployment rates (8.8%) and Fort McMurray/ Fort Chipewyan the highest (12%).
- Throughout the north, there is no obvious relationship between unemployment and low education level.

Although Canada Census data provide fairly reliable insights into education levels and trends, there are some limitations, particularly in terms of the population enumerated.

- Data for some Indian reserves and settlements are not included, because they were either incomplete or unavailable. Those native communities in northern Alberta that were incompletely enumerated includes Heart Lake and Beaver Lake (Region 1), Cold Lake (Region 7), and Whitefish (Region 6). The data that were available supports the widely held belief that a high proportion of native people have a low education level.
- Correctional institutions were not enumerated. Unofficial estimates by some providers in correctional institutions place the illiteracy rate as high as 80%.
- Income data are given for total households only; there is no breakdown to indicate the wage or salary of each person, or number of wage earners per household. This makes it difficult to pinpoint specific education - income trends, though general observations can be made.

THE STATISTICS: SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

Statistics were obtained for seven northern regions, the north as a whole and the province as a whole. Since the seven regions are generally referred to by number, a list showing the area covered by each is hereby provided.

- Region 1: Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan and area
- Region 2: High Level, Fort Vermilion and area
- Region 3: Fairview, Peace River and area
- Region 4: Grande Prairie, Valleyview and area
- Region 5: Grande Cache, Whitecourt, Swan Hills, Fox Creek and area
- Region 6: Grouard, Slave Lake and area
- Region 7: Athabasca, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Cold Lake and area.

PROPORTION OF PEOPLE WITH LESS THAN GRADE NINE

The following table indicates the total working age population, the illiteracy population and the illiteracy rates for the areas surveyed. The accompanying graph illustrates a regional breakdown of the literacy rates.

Table 1

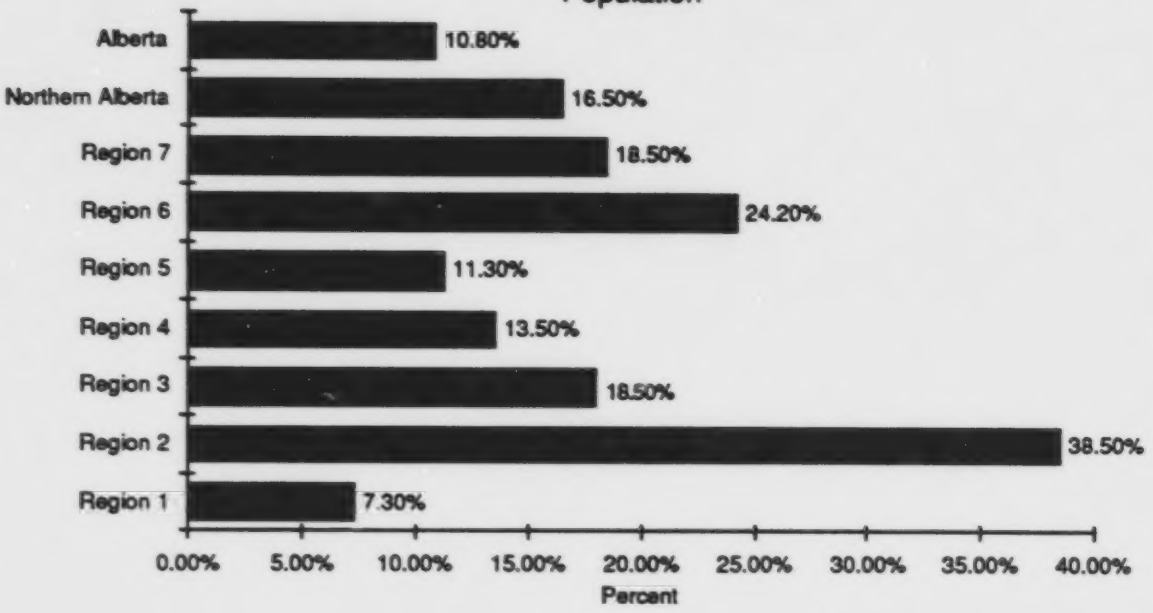
Illiterate Population and Illiteracy Rates

Region	Working Age (15+)	"Statistically Illiterate" Population	Illiteracy Rates
1	26,030	1,915	7.30%
2	8,720	3,360	38.50%
3	23,435	4,340	18.50%
4	41,420	5,595	13.50%
5	12,115	1,375	11.30%
6	13,540	3,290	24.20%
7	42,425	7,840	18.50%
Northern Alberta	167,685	27,715	16.50%
Alberta	1,776,070	192,280	10.80%

Source: Statistics Canada 1986

Graph 1

Illiteracy Rates: Percentage of Total Population



Source: Statistics Canada 1986

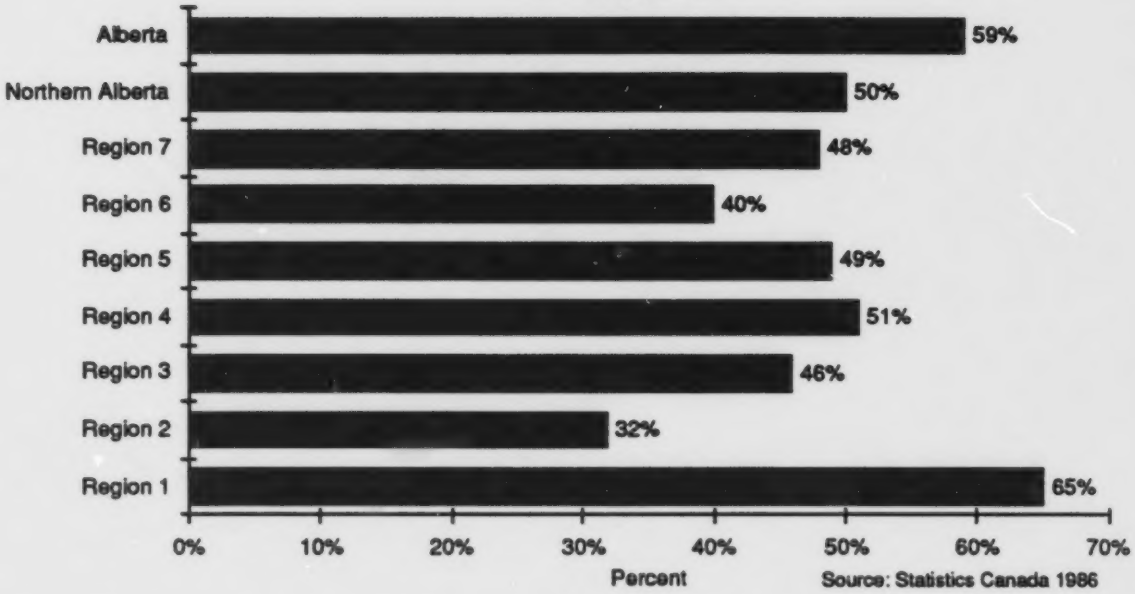
With the exception of Region 1, the illiteracy rates in all northern areas are above the provincial average; Regions 2 and 6 are significantly higher. However, the highest illiteracy rates do not necessarily mean the highest numbers of illiterate people. This is because population as a whole varies considerably from region to region. Areas of low population tend to have higher illiteracy rates. (The exceptions are Region 5 which is the reverse, and Region 3 which tends to be average on both counts.) When calculating the need for *services*, illiteracy numbers obviously should be considered; to identify the illiteracy *trends*, illiteracy rates must be used.

Region 1 - Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan, and area
Region 2 - High Level, Fort Vermilion, and area
Region 3 - Fairview, Peace River, and area
Region 4 - Grande Prairie, Valleyview, and area
Region 5 - Grande Cache, Whitecourt, Swan Hills, Fox Creek, and area
Region 6 - Grouard, High Prairie, East Prairie, Slave Lake, and area
Region 7 - Athabasca, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Cold Lake, and area

The percentage of northerners with high school diplomas and beyond is almost the regional reverse of those with less than Grade 9.

Graph 2

Percent of Total Population with High School Plus



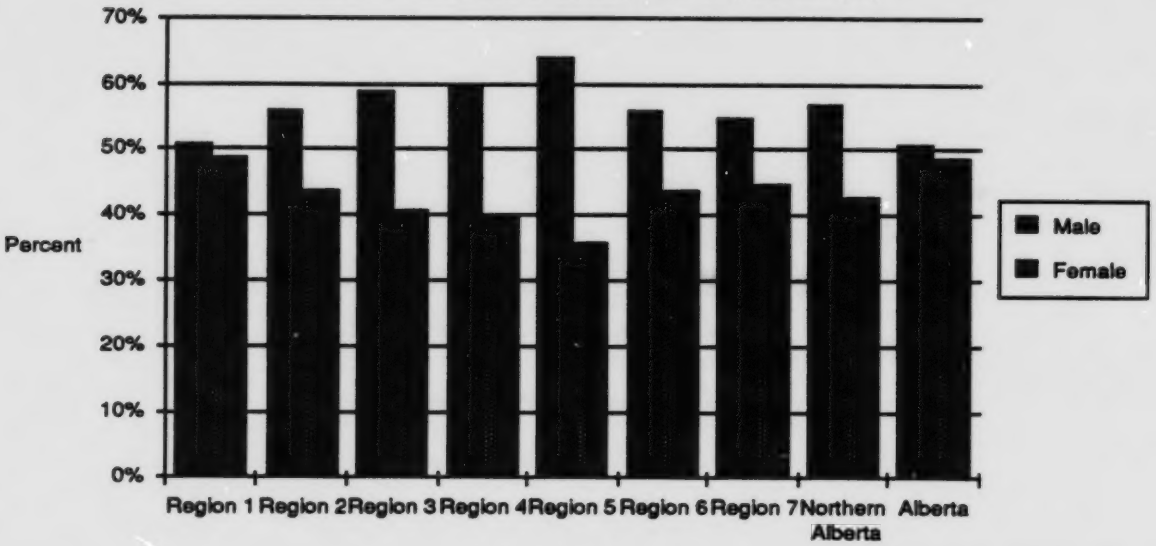
Note: The percentage difference between graph 1 and 2 include those individuals that have some grade 9, 10, 11 or 12.

GENDER GAP

Throughout all the northern regions and, indeed, the province as a whole, more males than females have less than Grade 9 education. The education gender gap varies from region to region; it is smallest for Region 1 and the province as a whole and largest for Region 5, where the gap is 28 percentage points. (The average gap is 12 percentage points.) Although the total adult populations for each region also contain gender gaps, they are much smaller than the education gender gaps. (The average gap is 4 percentage points.) The following graphs indicate the gender gap by education level and total population, while the accompanying table shows the numbers and rates for each gender on a region-by-region basis.

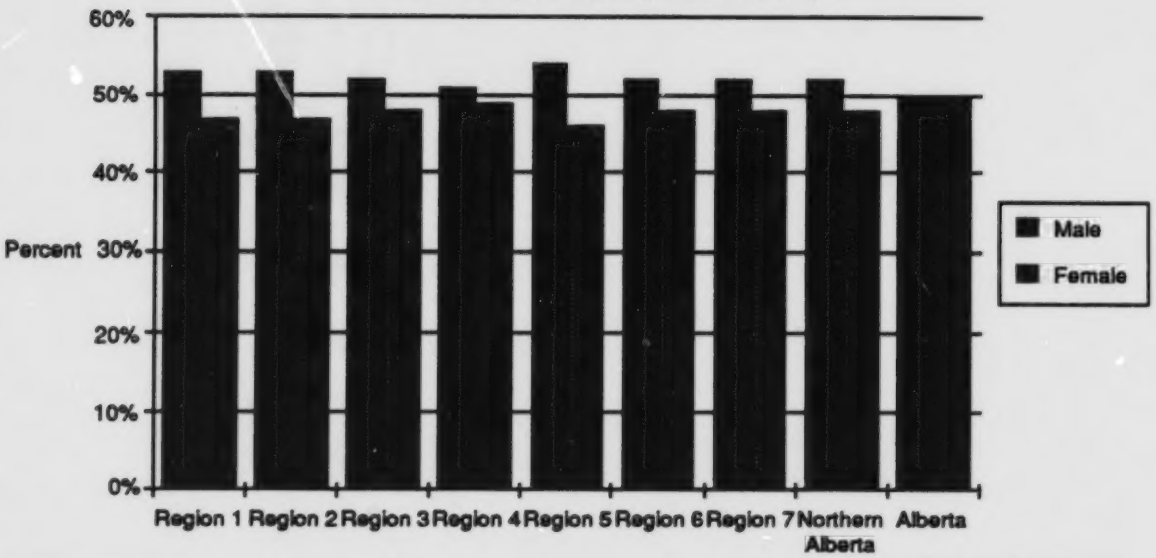
Region 1 - Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan, and area
Region 2 - High Level, Fort Vermilion, and area
Region 3 - Fairview, Peace River, and area
Region 4 - Grande Prairie, Valleyview, and area
Region 5 - Grande Cache, Whitecourt, Swan Hills, Fox Creek, and area
Region 6 - Grouard, High Prairie, East Prairie, Slave Lake, and area
Region 7 - Athabasca, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Cold Lake, and area

Graph 3
Gender of "Statistically Illiterate" Population (%)



Source: Statistics Canada 1986

Graph 4
Total Population by Gender (%)



Source: Statistics Canada 1986

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Region 7 - Athabasca, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Cold Lake, and area

Table 2

Gender Illiteracy Rates

Region	"Statistically Illiterate" males Number	Percentage	"Statistically Illiterate" females Number	Percentage
1	975	7%	935	7%
2	1,870	40%	1,475	36%
3	2,555	21%	1,780	16%
4	3,415	16%	2,245	11%
5	870	13%	490	9%
6	1,850	26%	1,500	23%
7	4,335	19%	3,470	17%
Northern Alberta	15,870	18%	11,895	15%
Alberta	98,490	11%	93,985	10%

Source: Statistics Canada 1986

AGE

Age is a significant factor when understanding illiteracy levels and calculating trends and needs. The following table shows the illiteracy numbers and rates for the four basic working age categories for each region.

Table 3

Illiteracy Rates - Age Groups

Region	15 - 24 Number	15 - 24 Percent	25 - 44 Number	25 - 44 Percent	45 - 64 Number	45 - 64 Percent	65 + Number	65 + Percent
1	445	6%	610	4%	615	18%	245	59%
2	895	31%	1,175	30%	925	62%	375	87%
3	415	7%	730	7%	1,920	38%	1,340	59%
4	615	6%	1,020	5%	2,295	27%	1,660	50%
5	240	7%	420	7%	500	24%	225	62%
6	715	18%	815	14%	1,170	45%	670	70%
7	540	5%	1,055	6%	3,265	36%	2,930	70%
Northern Alberta	3,865	9%	5,825	7%	10,690	33%	7,445	63%
Alberta	16,160	4%	32,525	4%	72,875	19%	70,790	41%

Source: Statistics Canada 1986

Region 1 - Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan, and area
Region 2 - High Level, Fort Vermilion, and area
Region 3 - Fairview, Peace River, and area
Region 4 - Grande Prairie, Valleyview, and area
Region 5 - Grande Cache, Whitecourt, Swan Hills, Fox Creek, and area
Region 6 - Grouard, High Prairie, East Prairie, Slave Lake, and area
Region 7 - Athabasca, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Cold Lake, and area

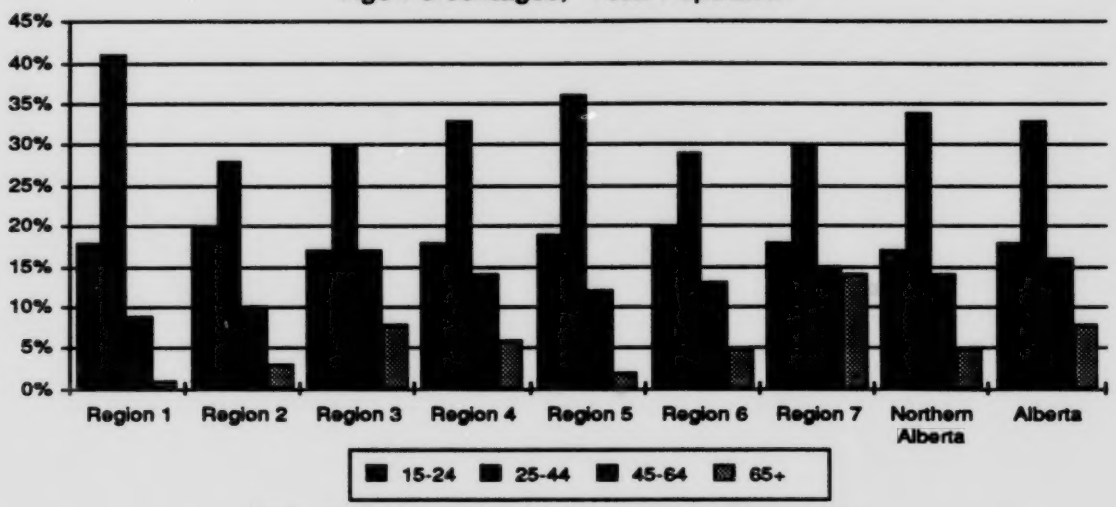
These rates reveal that the vast majority of people over 65 have less than a Grade 9 education, while the opposite is generally true for those under 45. The rate for people between the ages of 45 and 64 varies, but generally falls between 25% and 45%. Illiteracy rates among northern youth are high – more than twice the provincial average. However, while age rates are certainly an important component of the overall illiteracy scene, they can misrepresent the general trends.

An examination of the total population reveals that 51% of northern adults are under 45 and the bulk of the population is between 25 and 45 years of age. Thus, an age rate of 7% becomes 22% of the total illiterate population. The following two graphs provide information that tends to shift the emphasis from the older to the middle age groups.

Region 1 - Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan, and area
Region 2 - High Level, Fort Vermilion, and area
Region 3 - Fairview, Peace River, and area
Region 4 - Grande Prairie, Valleyview, and area
Region 5 - Grande Cache, Whitecourt, Swan Hills, Fox Creek, and area
Region 6 - Grouard, High Prairie, East Prairie, Slave Lake, and area
Region 7 - Athabasca, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Cold Lake, and area

Graph 5

Age Percentages, Total Population

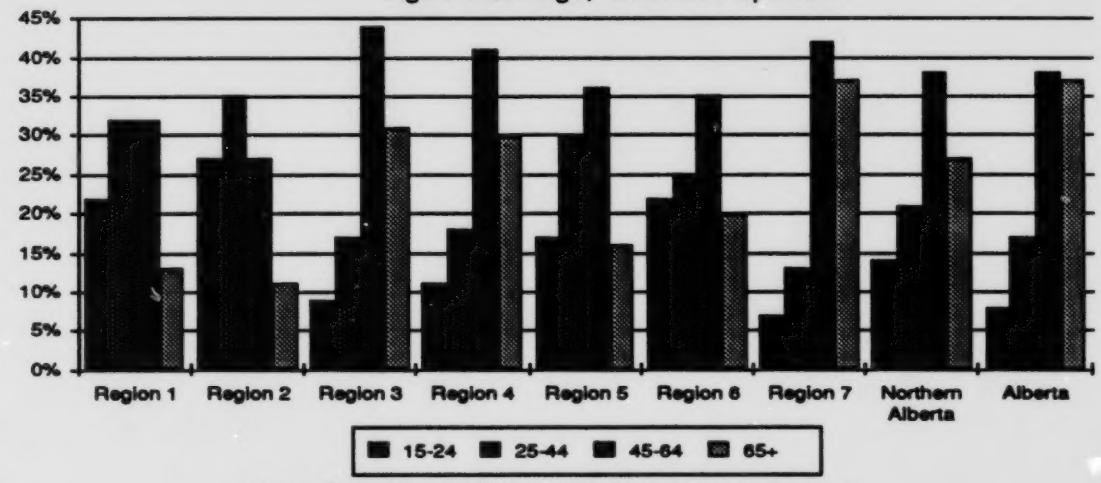


Note: Figures do not add up to 100% because population age 0-15 is not included

Source: Statistics Canada 1986

Graph 6

Age Percentage,* Illiterate Population



Note: Figures do not add up to 100% because population age 0-15 is not included

Source: Statistics Canada 1986

Region 1 - Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan, and area
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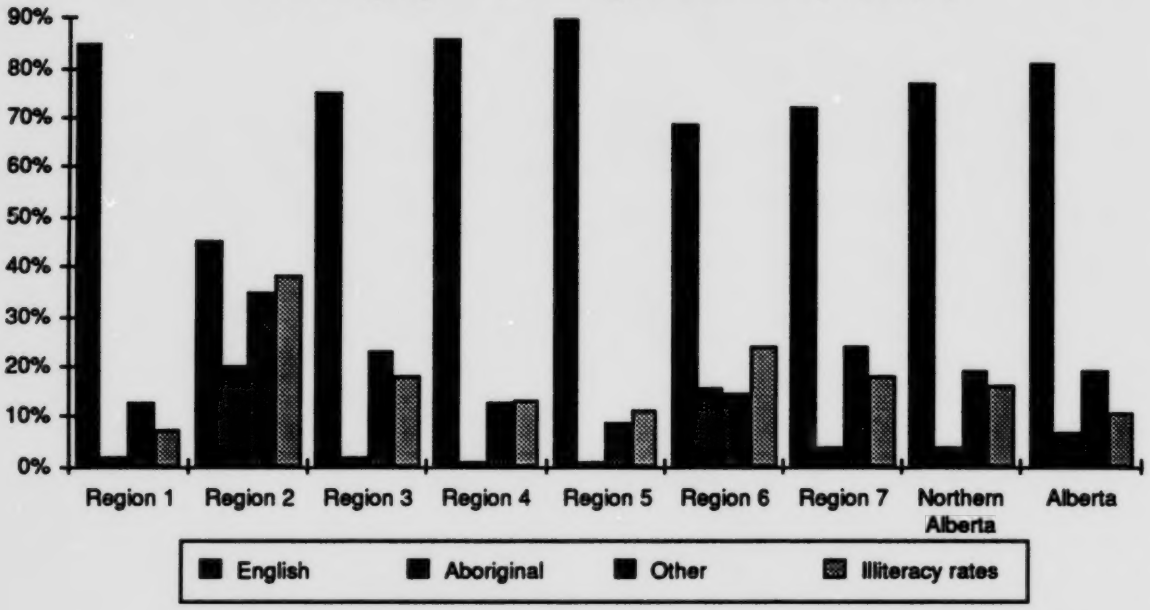
Region 7 - Athabasca, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Cold Lake, and area

FIRST LANGUAGE/MOTHER TONGUE

A comparison of first language/mother tongue and illiteracy quickly reveals one obvious trend: areas with comparatively high percentages of aboriginal language speakers have correspondingly high illiteracy rates.

Graph 7

First Language/Mother Tongue and Illiteracy Rate (%)



Source: Statistics Canada 1986

Another clear trend is the fact that the regions with the three lowest illiteracy rates (1, 4 and 5) have the highest percentage of people whose first language is English. Finally, the widely held belief that high illiteracy rates are somewhat connected to populations with large numbers of non-English speakers is particularly supported by regions 2, 3 and 7. Region 2 has the highest illiteracy rate and the lowest percentage of English as a first language speakers. With illiteracy rates of 18.5% each, regions 3 and 7 also have high rates of non-English, non-aboriginal language speakers.

Region 1 - Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan, and area
Region 2 - High Level, Fort Vermilion, and area
Region 3 - Fairview, Peace River, and area
Region 4 - Grande Prairie, Valleyview, and area
Region 5 - Grande Cache, Whitecourt, Swan Hills, Fox Creek, and area
Region 6 - Grouard, High Prairie, East Prairie, Slave Lake, and area
Region 7 - Athabasca, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Cold Lake, and area

ABORIGINAL ORIGIN

In order to provide a sharper focus on illiteracy in the north a closer examination was made of the percentage of aboriginal people in each region against the percentage with an aboriginal first language. The following table outlines these findings.

Table 4

Aboriginal Origin and Aboriginal First Language

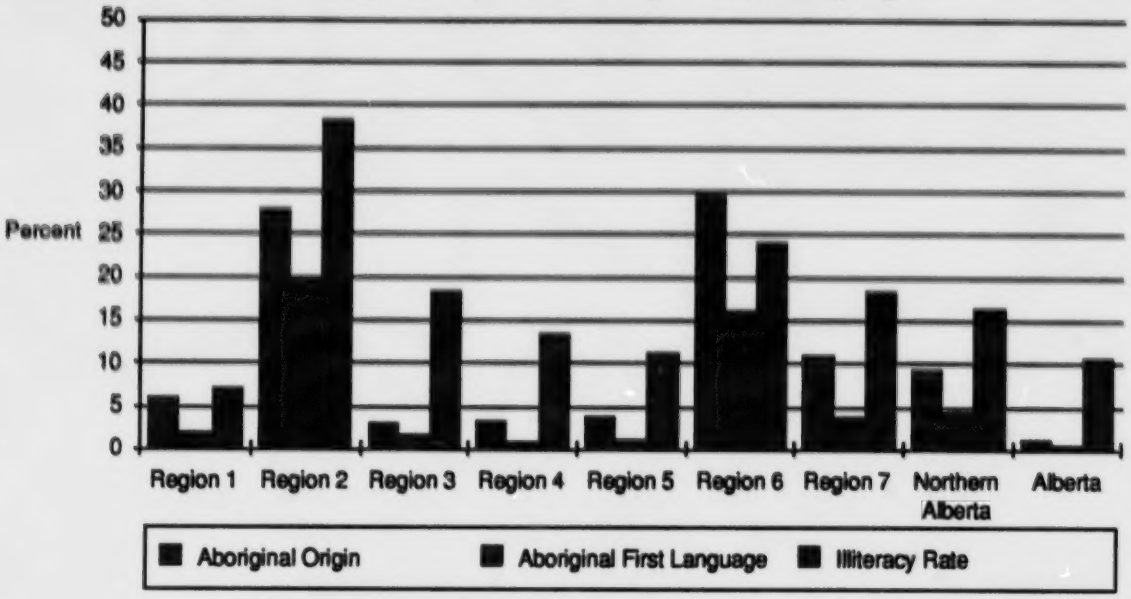
	Aboriginal peoples		Aboriginal 1st language		
Region	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Illiteracy Rate
1	2,290	6.2	755	2.0	7.3%
2	3,985	28.0	2,885	20.1	38.5%
3	980	3.0	610	1.8	18.5%
4	2,000	3.4	595	1.0	13.5%
5	715	4.0	225	1.3	11.3%
6	5,940	29.7	3,210	16.1	24.2%
7	6,585	11.0	2,420	4.0	18.5%
Northern Alberta	22,495	9.4	10,700	4.5	16.5%
Alberta	28,995	1.4	16,575	0.7	10.8%

Source: Statistics Canada 1986

Region 1 - Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan, and area
Region 2 - High Level, Fort Vermilion, and area
Region 3 - Fairview, Peace River, and area
Region 4 - Grande Prairie, Valleyview, and area
Region 5 - Grande Cache, Whitecourt, Swan Hills, Fox Creek, and area
Region 6 - Grouard, High Prairie, East Prairie, Slave Lake, and area
Region 7 - Athabasca, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Cold Lake, and area

Graph 8

Aboriginal Origin and Aboriginal First Language



Source: Statistics Canada 1986

The two regions with the highest illiteracy rates (2 and 6) also have the highest percentage of native peoples and those noting an aboriginal language as their first language/mother tongue. Regions 3 and 7, although having the same illiteracy rate of 18.5%, show significantly different population make-ups. Region 3 has 3% native peoples while Region 7 has 11%.

Region 1 - Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan, and area
Region 2 - High Level, Fort Vermilion, and area
Region 3 - Fairview, Peace River, and area
Region 4 - Grande Prairie, Valleyview, and area
Region 5 - Grande Cache, Whitecourt, Swan Hills, Fox Creek, and area
Region 6 - Grouard, High Prairie, East Prairie, Slave Lake, and area
Region 7 - Athabasca, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Cold Lake, and area

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

The table below shows the average annual household income for each region, plus the regional illiteracy rates. The trends are easy to see. In general, the higher the illiteracy rate, the lower the income.

Table 5

Household Income

Region	Average annual Income	Illiteracy Rate
1	53,461	7.30%
2	31,571	38.50%
3	31,128	18.50%
4	38,050	13.50%
5	33,975	11.30%
6	30,744	24.20%
7	31,924	18.50%
Northern Alberta	36,251	16.50%
Alberta	36,805	10.80%

The regions with the lowest incomes have the highest illiteracy rates and the highest numbers of aboriginal language speakers.

Region 1 - Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan, and area
Region 2 - High Level, Fort Vermilion, and area
Region 3 - Fairview, Peace River, and area
Region 4 - Grande Prairie, Valleyview, and area
Region 5 - Grande Cache, Whitecourt, Swan Hills, Fox Creek, and area
Region 6 - Grouard, High Prairie, East Prairie, Slave Lake, and area
Region 7 - Athabasca, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Cold Lake, and area

EMPLOYMENT

Interestingly enough, unemployment rates in regions with high illiteracy rates are not significantly higher than the provincial norm. In fact, the unemployment rate for Region 2 is *lower* than that for the province as a whole and is the second lowest of all the regions surveyed.

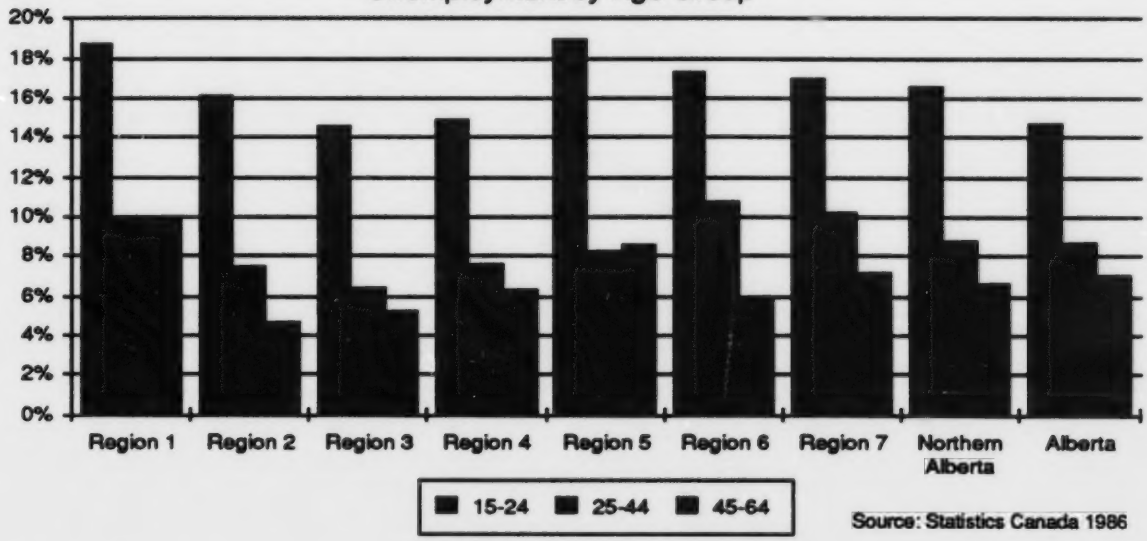
Graph 9

Source: Statistics Canada 1986

Region 1 - Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan, and area
Region 2 - High Level, Fort Vermilion, and area
Region 3 - Fairview, Peace River, and area
Region 4 - Grande Prairie, Valleyview, and area
Region 5 - Grande Cache, Whitecourt, Swan Hills, Fox Creek, and area
Region 6 - Grouard, High Prairie, East Prairie, Slave Lake, and area
Region 7 - Athabasca, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Cold Lake, and area

Graph 10

Unemployment by Age Group



Source: Statistics Canada 1986

To aid in understanding unemployment trends, the graphs above provide age, gender and total unemployment rates for each region. The table below provides the illiteracy rates for the same statistical categories.

Table 6

Illiteracy Rates (%)

Region	Total	Male	Female	15 - 24	25 - 44	45 - 64
1	7.3%	7%	7%	6%	4%	18%
2	38.5%	40%	36%	31%	30%	62%
3	18.5%	21%	16%	7%	7%	38%
4	13.5%	16%	11%	6%	5%	27%
5	11.3%	13%	9%	7%	7%	24%
6	24.2%	26%	23%	18%	14%	45%
7	18.5%	19%	17%	5%	6%	36%
Northern Alberta	16.5%	18%	15%	9%	7%	33%
Alberta	10.8%	11%	10%	4%	4%	19%

Source: Statistics Canada 1986

These figures certainly contradict the commonly held belief that illiterate people are likely to be unemployed. Rather, they suggest that there is little statistical relationship between unemployment and illiteracy.

Region 1 - Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan, and area
Region 2 - High Level, Fort Vermilion, and area
Region 3 - Fairview, Peace River, and area
Region 4 - Grande Prairie, Valleyview, and area
Region 5 - Grande Cache, Whitecourt, Swan Hills, Fox Creek, and area
Region 6 - Grouard, High Prairie, East Prairie, Slave Lake, and area
Region 7 - Athabasca, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Cold Lake, and area

Particularly striking is the fact that Region 1 has the highest rate of unemployment (12%) and the lowest rate of illiteracy (7.3%). A quick glance at the gender and age breakdowns shows that Region 1 women and people over 24 are among the highest unemployed of the survey (16.3% and 18.8% respectively), and yet are also among the lowest illiteracy rates by population category (7% and 6% respectively). Clearly, some factor other than illiteracy is responsible for high unemployment in Fort McMurray and Fort Chipewyan.

Upon speculation, several explanations may lend insight to the overall relationship between literacy and work in general.

- Perhaps older people with less than Grade 9 are actually more literate than younger people with less than Grade 9 and are better able to take advantage of employment opportunities. People leaving school 30 or 40 years ago may have been more likely to continue developing reading and writing skills than those who left school during the last decade, at a time when entertainment, recreation and communication seemed to become more electronically-centered and less literacy-centered. As well, older people will have more job experience, sometimes accepted as the equivalent of high school.
- It may be that the employment base of Region 2 has traditionally been dominated by occupations requiring little literacy. In this way, older people have been able to obtain and keep jobs. However, the demand for literacy may increase as new fields of work open up, making it increasingly difficult for younger illiterate people to get work.

In any event, the figures that are available reveal very little in the way of a relationship between illiteracy and unemployment. This is supported by the Southam survey, which found that 86% of illiterate people in the labor force had a full or part-time job during the 12 months preceding the survey.

Region 1 - Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan, and area
Region 2 - High Level, Fort Vermilion, and area
Region 3 - Fairview, Peace River, and area
Region 4 - Grande Prairie, Valleyview, and area
Region 5 - Grande Cache, Whitecourt, Swan Hills, Fox Creek, and area
Region 6 - Grouard, High Prairie, East Prairie, Slave Lake, and area
Region 7 - Athabasca, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Cold Lake, and area

CONCLUSION: WHO ARE THE ILLITERATE NORTHERNERS?

The illiterate population of northern Alberta is as diverse as any other 'special' population. It comprises people with different characteristics, all of whom have illiteracy in common. There really is no such thing as a "typical illiterate person". Nevertheless, there are some trends that set the boundaries of the illiterate target group:

- *Male* – Fifty-seven percent are men versus 43% women
- *Older* – Sixty-five percent are over 45 years of age
- *Native* – Illiteracy rates increase with an increased number of aboriginal peoples

There are others who are also illiterate but who do not exactly fit the picture. These include:

- *Women* – The illiteracy rate among northern women is still higher than the provincial average (15% versus 10%).
- *Young people and people between the ages of 25 and 44*—The illiteracy rates for those two groups are higher in the north than the province as a whole (14% versus 8% and 21% versus 17% respectively). Only 27% of the northern illiterate population is over 65, compared to 37% for the province.
- *English speakers and speakers of other languages*—Seventy-seven percent of all northerners speak English as their first language; 19% have a first language other than English; 4% are aboriginal speakers. Ethnic origin also plays a role.

These, then, are the northerners with less than Grade 9 education. How do they compare to their more educated neighbors? In terms of personal traits, they may have more in common with the rest of the northern population than one might at first suppose. At the same time, they do live somewhat more limited lives. In their world, opportunities for occupational advancement are especially restricted, as is the ability to read and write.

There are 27,715 Northern Albertans who, with less than a Grade 9 education, probably fit into this category. Whatever their individual characteristics may be, their needs are real. How are they being served?

LITERACY LEARNERS: A COMPARATIVE PROFILE

INTRODUCTION: OVERVIEW AND HIGHLIGHTS

This section examines the characteristics of northern people who enroll in literacy programs. The data presented were compiled from a telephone survey of the literacy projects in the north—46 in total.* The data are given according to the three program types below and are for 1988 enrollment.

- ABE or adult basic education projects
- VTP or volunteer tutor projects
- ESL or English as a Second Language projects

The section concludes with a summary of the general characteristics of "typical literacy learners", as compared with those of "typical illiterate persons".

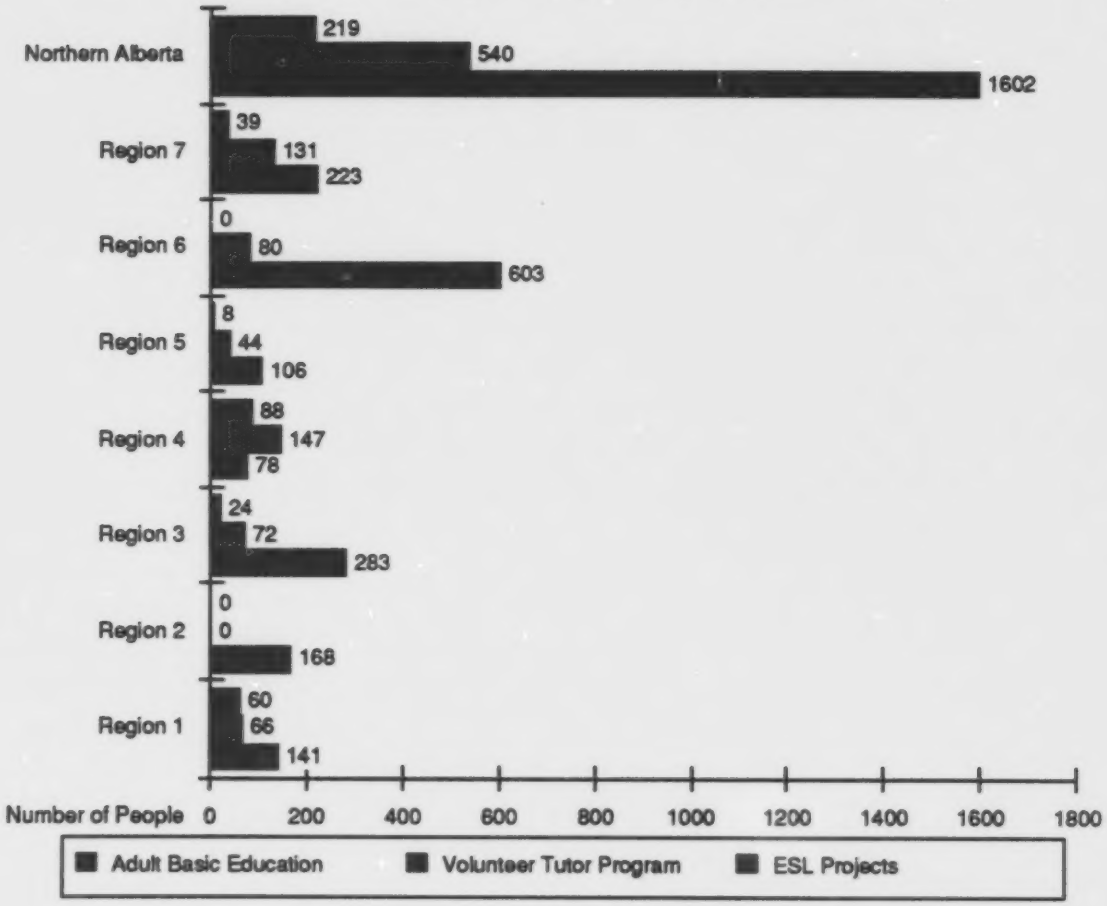
NOTE:

* Information was obtained from 44 of the 46 projects. Data was not available from the ABE project in High Level, or the ESL program offered through AVC Lac La Biche. As well, the Reading and Writing Tutor Project (High Level) and the Fort Vermilion Tutor Project were classified as ABE although they are listed as VTP in the Alberta Advanced Education 1988 *Directory*. It was discovered that these two projects appear to have more in common with the ABE structure than the VTP structure.

The graph below shows the total number of learners enrolled in each region, according to the three program types.

Graph 11

Program Enrollment by Region - 1988



Region 1 - Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan, and area
Region 2 - High Level, Fort Vermilion, and area
Region 3 - Fairview, Peace River, and area
Region 4 - Grande Prairie, Valleyview, and area
Region 5 - Grande Cache, Whitecourt, Swan Hills, Fox Creek, and area
Region 6 - Grouard, High Prairie, East Prairie, Slave Lake, and area
Region 7 - Athabasca, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Cold Lake, and area

Other highlights of the telephone survey include the following points:

- Literacy learners tend to be young: 47% of the 1988 learners were under 25, while 44% were between the ages of 25 and 44. Under-25 especially dominated ABE and ESL courses, while most VTP learners were between the ages of 25 and 44.
- The gender gap for VTP and ESL learners is almost non-existent; it is quite substantial in ABE programs, where the 1988 spread was 12% in favor of women. Most learners are women—56%, compared to 44% men.
- The first language of learners is often aboriginal. In 1988, 44% of learners were aboriginal speakers compared to 33% English speakers and 15% who had a first language indicative of a non-European background. This last group dominates ESL classes, while most ABE students are native and most VTP learners are English speaking.
- With the exception of VTP learners, whose known 1988 unemployment was only 16%, ABE learners tend to be unemployed. The overall known unemployment rate among 1988 learners was 56%; among ABE learners it was 67%. The ESL unemployment rate was a very high 80%. (The 1988 employment status of many learners is unknown—17% overall and 21% for ABE learners.)
- Many employed learners have unskilled occupations—32% of the 1988 enrollment. Almost all the employed ESL learners fell into that category, though many had been professionals in their home countries.
- Few learners have no school experience at all but only 4% of the 1988 enrollment had a high school diploma or beyond. Most leave school before reaching high school: 62% of the 1988 enrollment had less than a grade 9 education. ESL students tend to be slightly better educated while ABE enrollments show a predominance in the upper-level grade areas.
- Learners tend to enroll in projects close to home. Only 16% of the 1988 enrollment travelled more than 20 miles to attend literacy courses or tutoring.

Regional breakdowns of these characteristics generally follow the same patterns. Further details, especially regarding wide variations and anomalies, are provided in the pages that follow.*

NOTE:

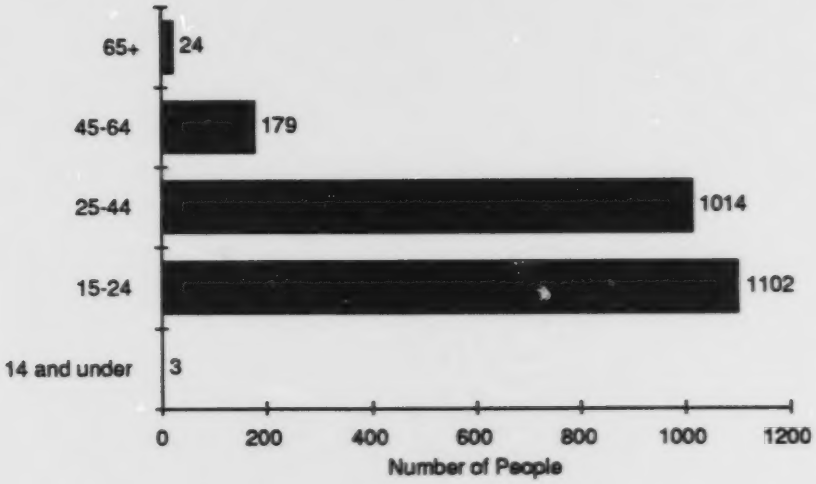
* It should be noted that characteristics for 39 ESL learners at LEARN (Lakeland College) were not available. Hence, the ESL "characteristics totals" that follow add up to 180 learners instead of the 219 indicated in Graph 11. The "characteristics totals" for all three project types add up to 2,322 instead of the overall 2,361 total (Graph 11).

AGE

The three graphs below establish that the majority of literacy learners are young. Of 2,322 learners, fully 91% enrolled in literacy programs are under 45; almost half (47%) of those are under 25.

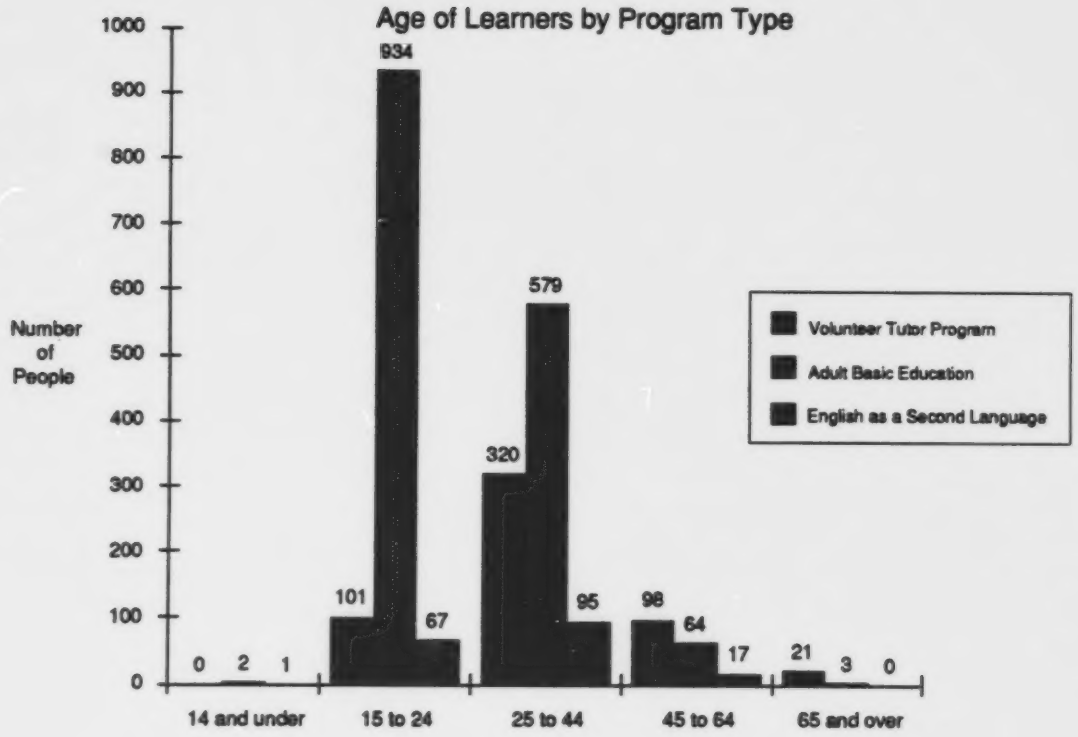
Graph 12

Learners' Age Distribution: Northern Alberta



The 15-24 age group especially dominates ABE projects— by 54%. Without this concentration, however, the split between the 15-24 and 25-44 categories would probably lean a bit more toward the latter, since 25-44 year-olds more than double the 15-24 VTP enrollment figures. There is a clear under-representation of older learners.

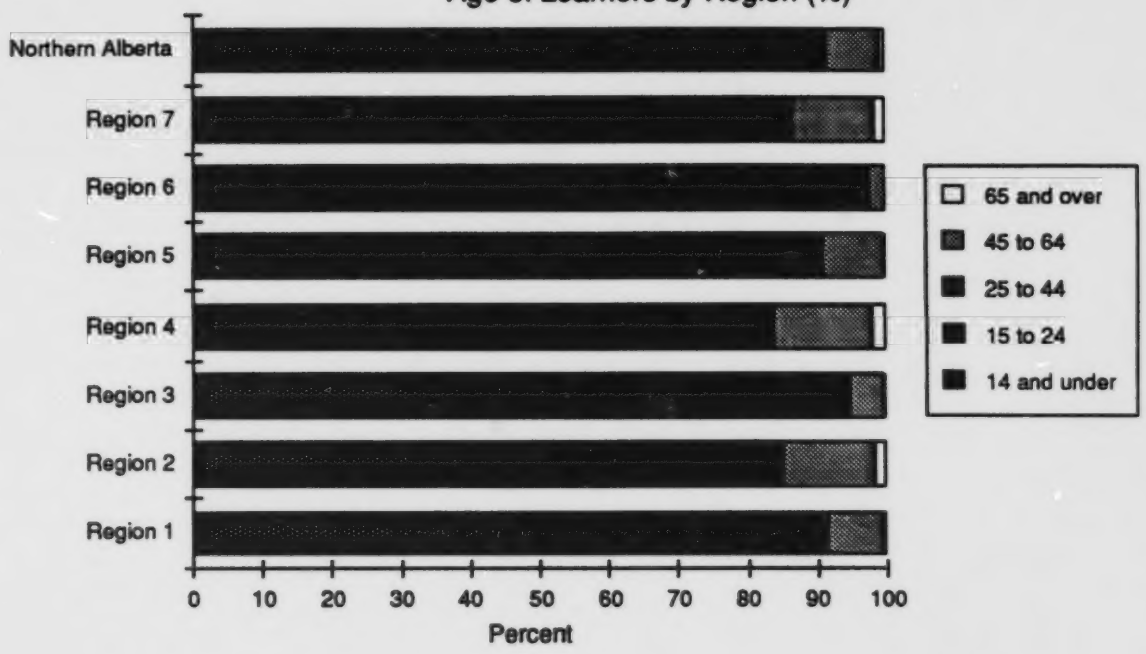
Graph 13



Regionally, the age trends remain basically the same.

Graph 14

Age of Learners by Region (%)



Is there a relationship between illiterate people and illiterate learners? If there is, it is an inverse one, since *65% of the statistically illiterate population is over 45*, yet 91% of the literacy learners are under 45.

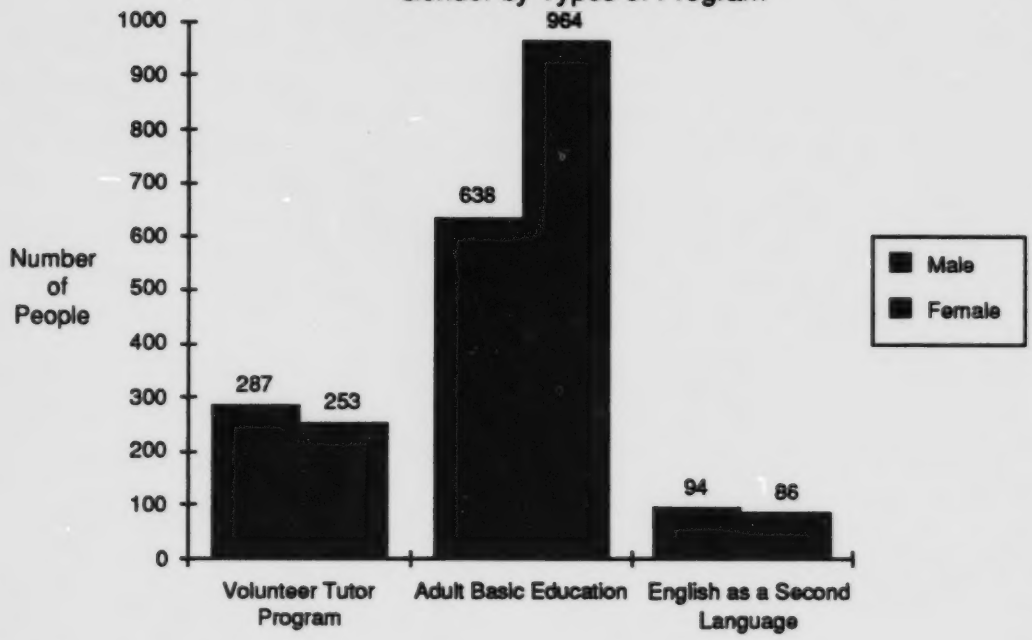
Region 1 - Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan, and area
Region 2 - High Level, Fort Vermilion, and area
Region 3 - Fairview, Peace River, and area
Region 4 - Grande Prairie, Valleyview, and area
Region 5 - Grande Cache, Whitecourt, Swan Hills, Fox Creek, and area
Region 6 - Grouard, High Prairie, East Prairie, Slave Lake, and area
Region 7 - Athabasca, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Cold Lake, and area

GENDER

Statistics show that females are more inclined to enroll in literacy programs than are males. In 1988, 1,303 women received some kind of literacy assistance, compared to 1,019 men. Most of those women were enrolled in ABE projects.

Graph 15

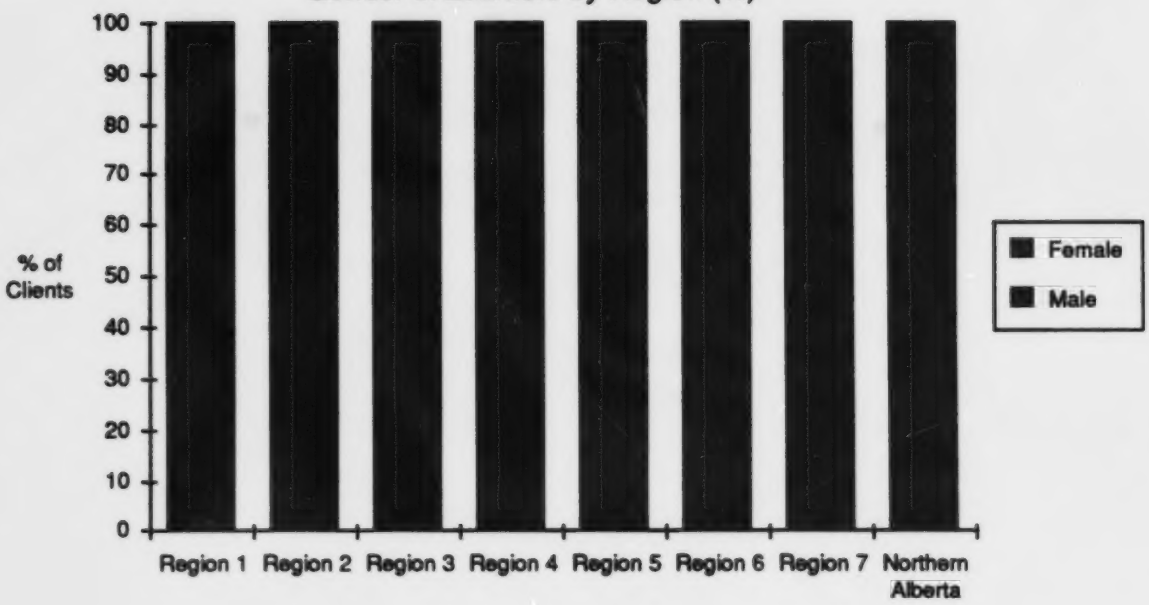
Gender by Types of Program



The difference perhaps relates to the fact that the unemployment rate for women is higher than that for men; therefore, more women seek full time ABE courses while men can better afford part-time VTP tutoring. In any event, it is interesting that the gender gap is slightly reversed for the VTP and ESL program types. This is a fairly consistent pattern regionally however.

Graph 16

Gender of Learners by Region (%)



Men are slightly less represented in Regions 1 and 6 than elsewhere. Again, however, Region 1 has a very high female unemployment rate - 16.3%. But the unemployment explanation does not work for Region 6, where more men than women are without work (11.8% versus 10.5%). Region 6 may simply be an anomaly—as is the over-representation of male learners in Region 3. The illiterate gender gap is no higher there than elsewhere, and the unemployment rate for Region 3 is among the lowest at 7.3%.

If there is an overall relationship between the illiterate gender gap and the learner gender gap, it, too, is an inverse one. Within the illiterate population 52% are males and 48% are females. Yet, only 44% of the learners are men, compared to 56% women.

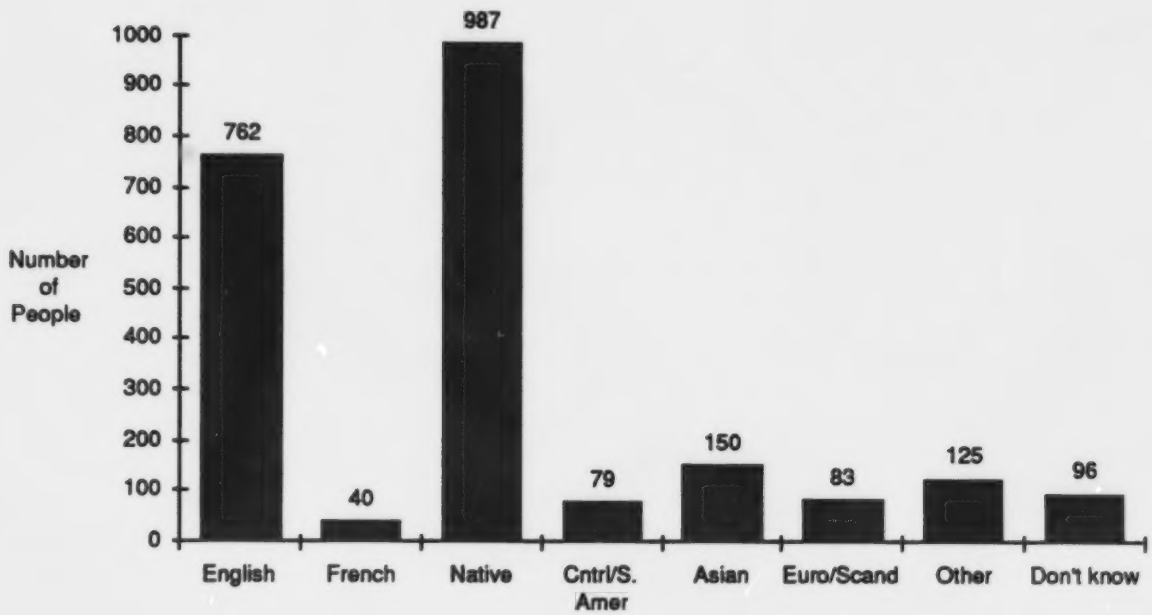
Region 1 - Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan, and area
Region 2 - High Level, Fort Vermilion, and area
Region 3 - Fairview, Peace River, and area
Region 4 - Grande Prairie, Valleyview, and area
Region 5 - Grande Cache, Whitecourt, Swan Hills, Fox Creek, and area
Region 6 - Grouard, High Prairie, East Prairie, Slave Lake, and area
Region 7 - Athabasca, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Cold Lake, and area

FIRST LANGUAGE

Almost half the northern learners are aboriginal speakers. This reflects the fact that areas with high literacy rates have relatively high native populations. But natives are actually over-represented as learners, since only 9.4% are of native origin and only 4% of the total northern population is composed of aboriginal speakers. Indeed, the native enrollment provides further evidence that the illiteracy rate among natives is significantly higher than non-natives.

Graph 17

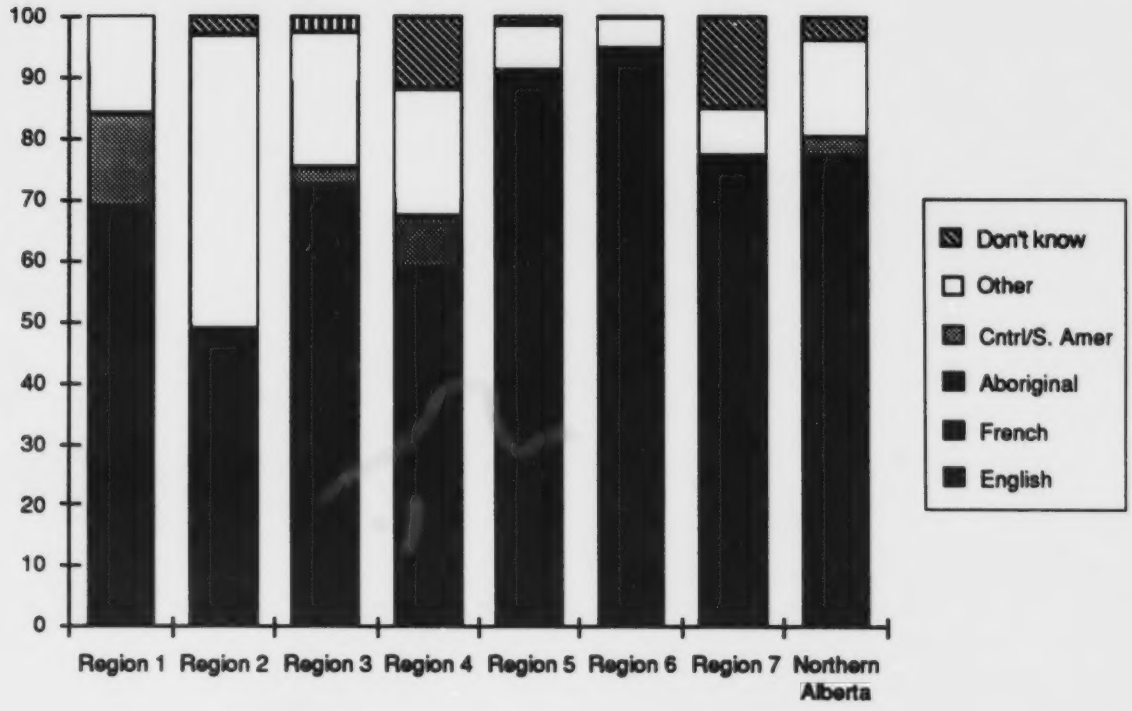
First Languages of Learners - Northern Alberta



Given that 77% of the northern population is English, it stands to reason that a significant proportion of literacy learners are English. This is especially true for Regions 4 and 5, which have the highest populations of English speakers (86% and 90% respectively) and the highest numbers of English learners.

Graph 18

First Language of Learners by Region (%)

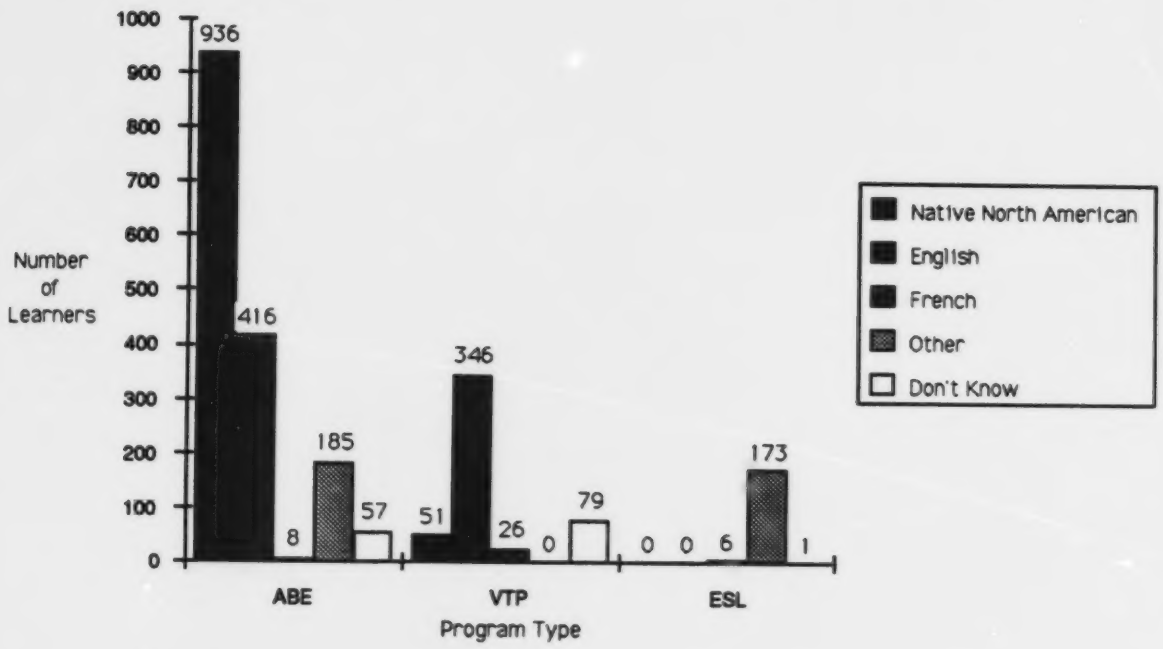


It would seem, then, that the linguistic origins of the learners reflect the first language trends of the illiterate population. Note: The high proportion of 'other' language speakers in Region 2 are Canadian-born Mennonites, who speak Plavtdeutsch (Low German).

Region 1 - Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan, and area
Region 2 - High Level, Fort Vermilion, and area
Region 3 - Fairview, Peace River, and area
Region 4 - Grande Prairie, Valleyview, and area
Region 5 - Grande Cache, Whitecourt, Swan Hills, Fox Creek, and area
Region 6 - Grouard, High Prairie, East Prairie, Slave Lake, and area
Region 7 - Athabasca, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Cold Lake, and area

Graph 19

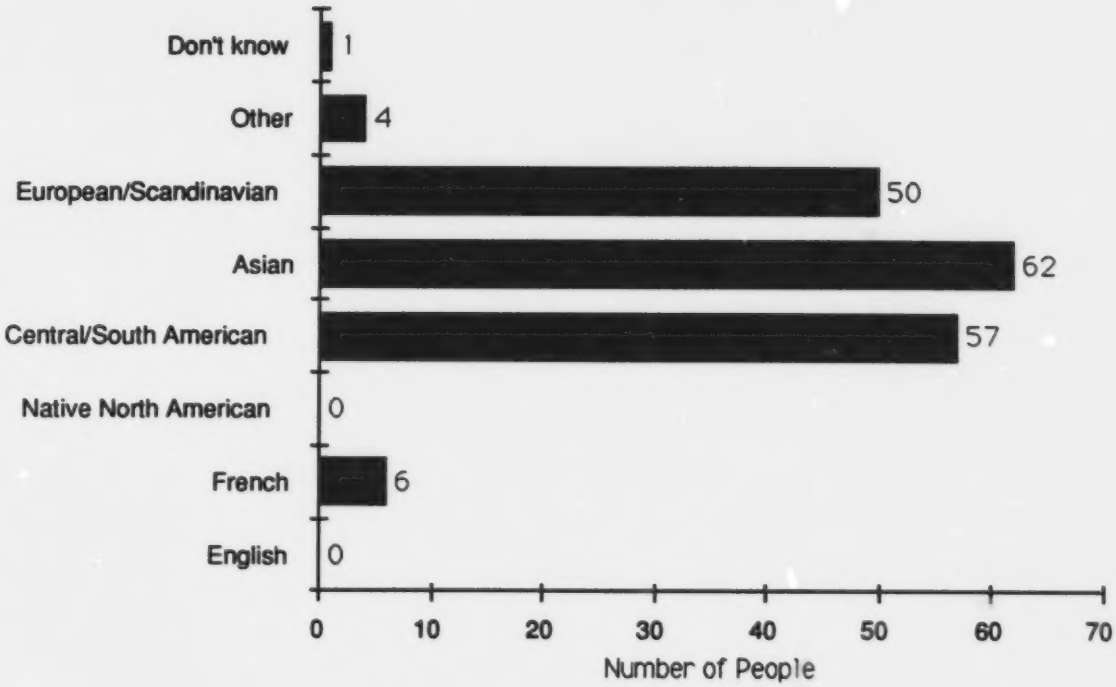
First Language by Program Type



A further breakdown in the ESL Program provides a clearer picture of the learners' linguistic backgrounds.

Graph 20

First Language: English as a Second Language Learners



Again, the reason for the high ABE native enrollment might be explained by what is generally thought to be a high unemployment rate among natives. (ABE learners are usually unemployed; they must be to receive financial assistance.) It might also be due to a successful native referral system and/or availability of programs.

Of course, ESL learners are non-English speakers. The absence of natives in ESL classes could be due to a number of factors:

- There are only five centres in northern Alberta that offer ESL courses and they are not central to the native communities.
- ESL is not seen as an appropriate course to help natives become literate.
- Many native people do speak English, though with varying degrees of proficiency.

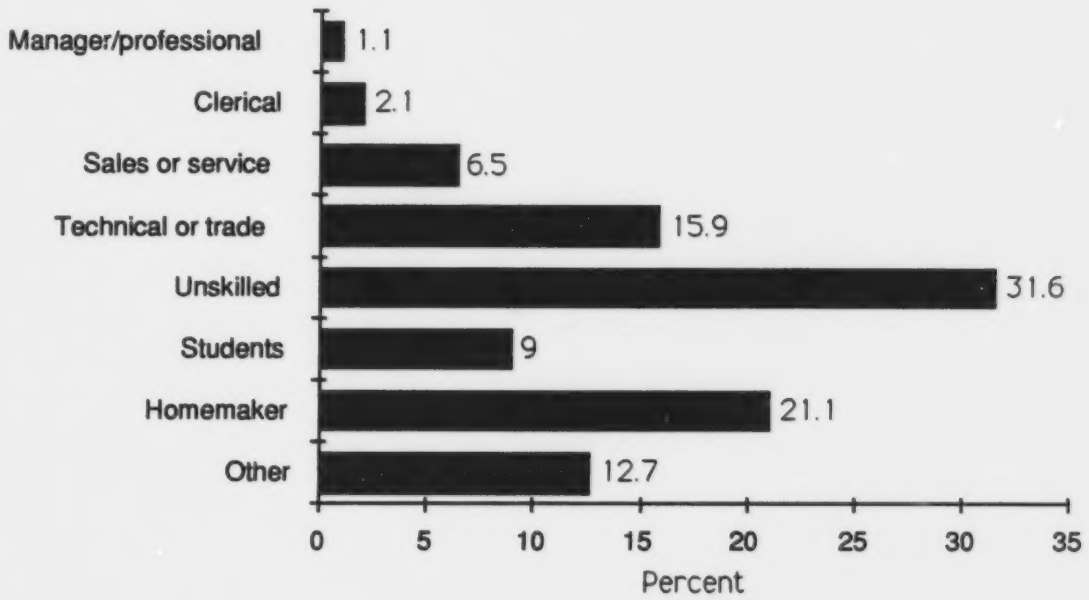
The VTP program is the one most likely to be dominated by English speakers.

EMPLOYMENT

Not unexpectedly, the majority of learners tend to be unemployed (56%, or 1,311 out of 2,322 "characterized" learners). The employment status of a significant percentage of learners was reported as unknown (17% or 391 learners). Of the 620 who were reported as having employment in 1988, most were engaged in unskilled occupations (31.6%), or else were homemakers (21.1%) or students (9.0%) with little, if any, employment background.

Graph 21

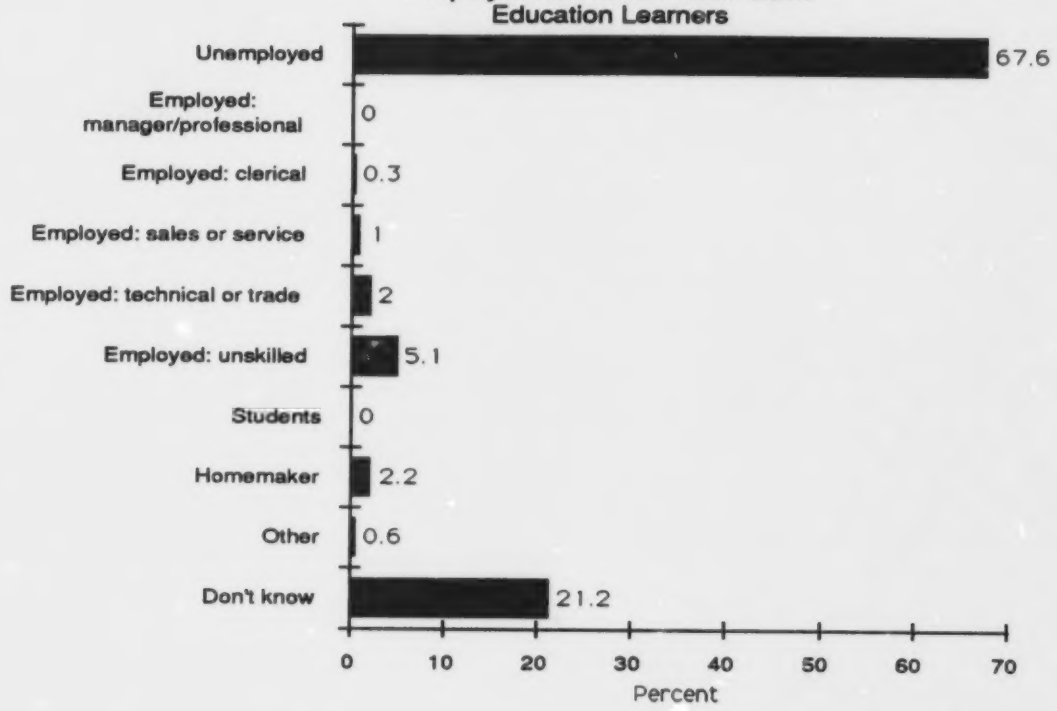
Employment Profiles of Literacy Learners - Northern Alberta



ABE learners are the most likely to be unemployed; VTP learners are the most likely to have jobs. The proportion of 'high skill' occupations is also the greatest among VTP learners. ESL learners are primarily unemployed, and what jobs they do have do not necessarily reflect their original occupations, since some were professionals in their home countries.

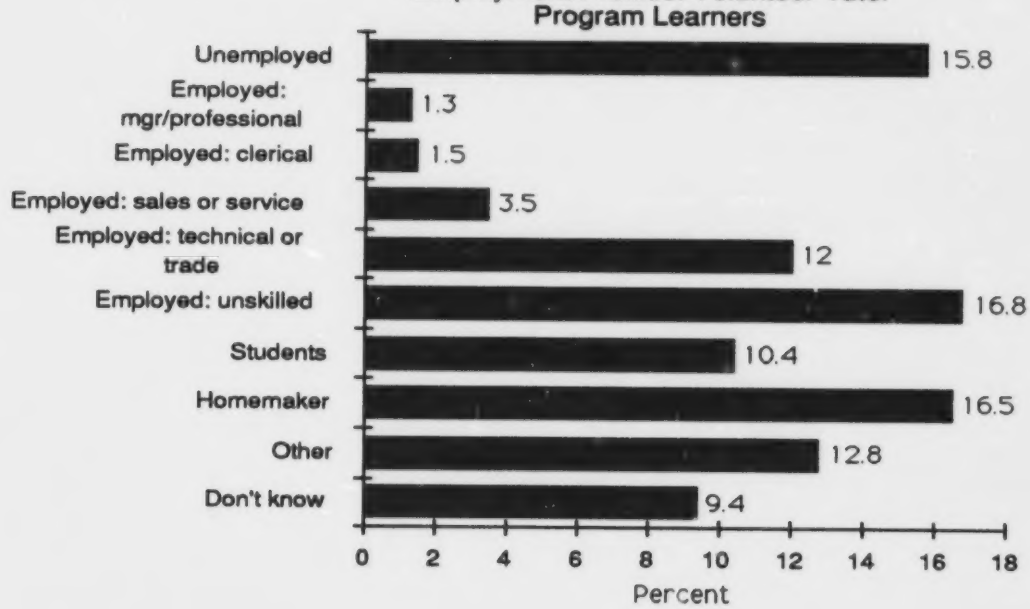
Graph 22

Employment Profiles: Adult Basic Education Learners

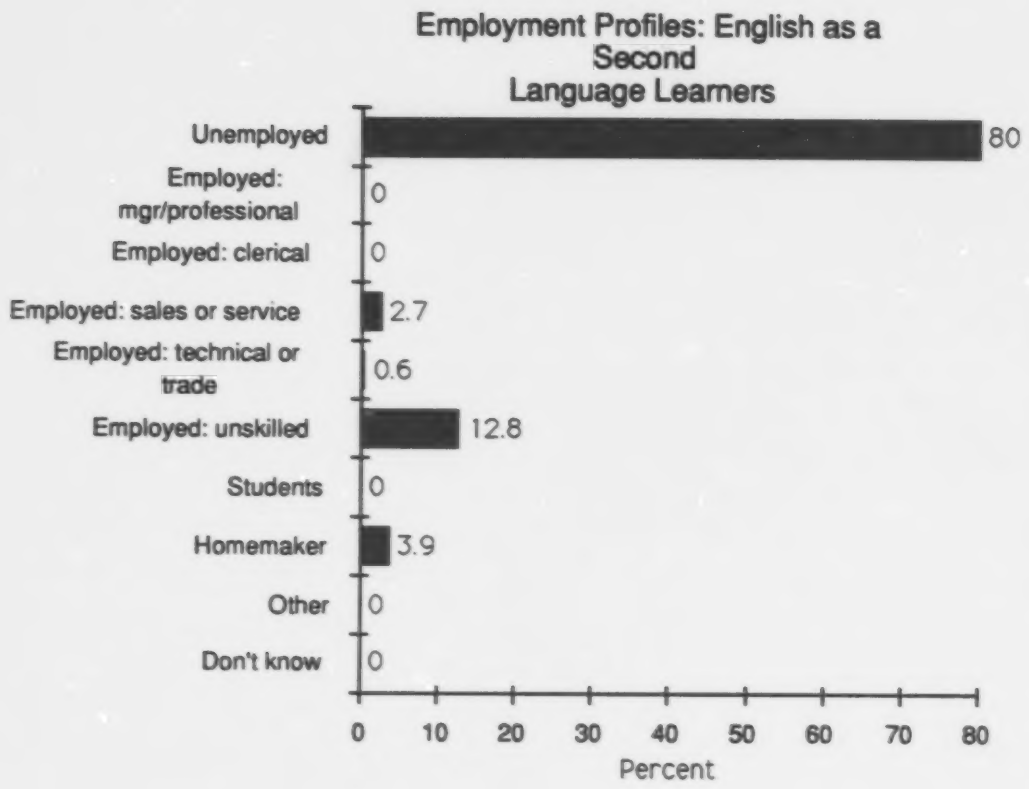


Graph 23

Employment Profiles: Volunteer Tutor Program Learners



Graph 24

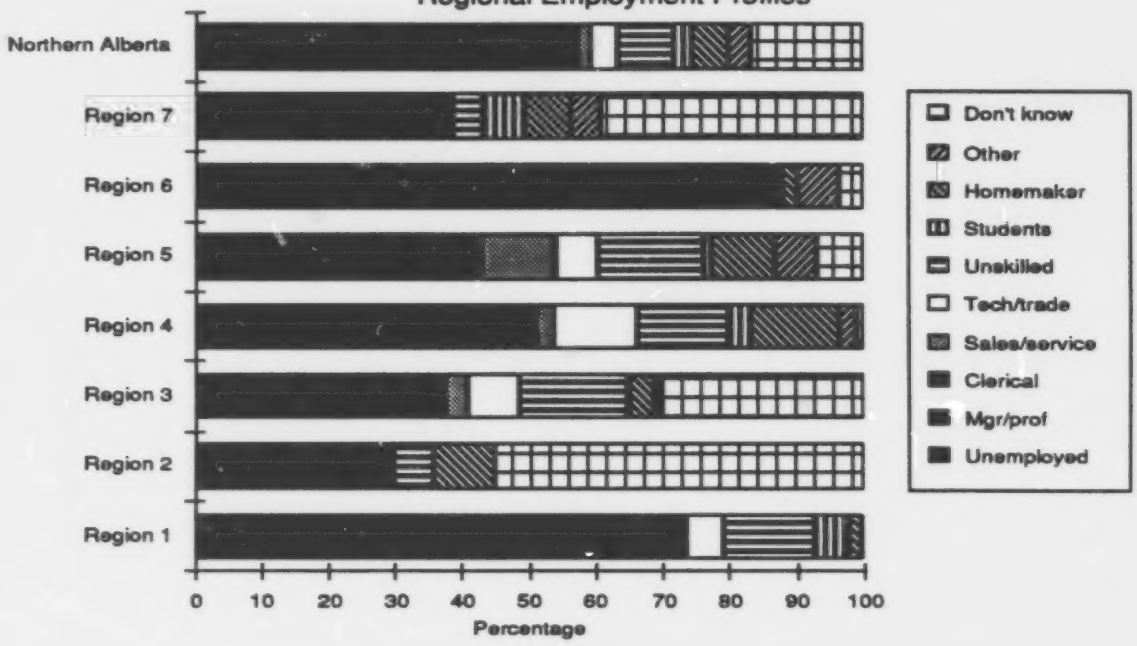


Again, the high percentage of ABE unemployment is likely due to the fact that the programs are full-time and learners are financially supported only if they are unemployed and attend school full-time. This is often the case with ESL programs, as well. The flexibility of VTP tutoring, on the other hand, allows employed people to upgrade their literacy skills on a very part-time basis. There may, in fact, be less urgency with VTP learners.

Unemployment also dominates the regional enrollment picture.

Graph 25

Regional Employment Profiles



Regional breakdowns reveal no obvious relationship between learner unemployment and that of the illiterate population as a whole. It seems, however, that high learner unemployment is related to *either* high unemployment rates or high illiteracy rates - or some combination thereof.

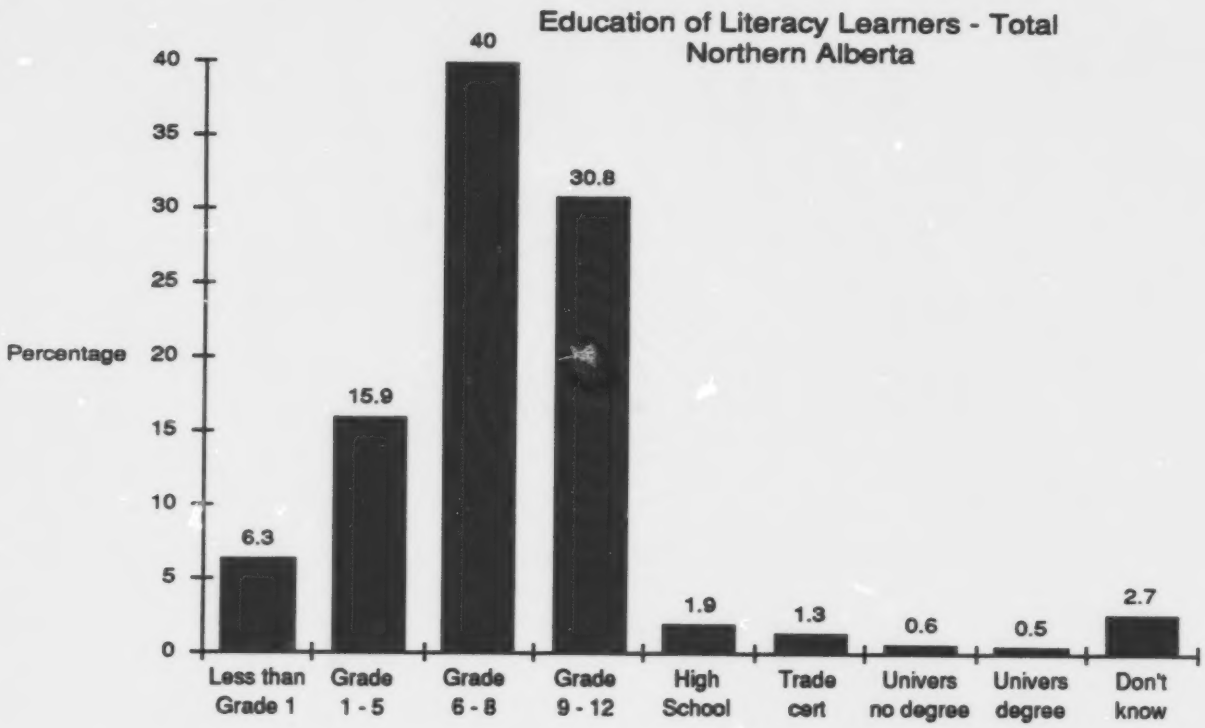
- Region 1 shows a large number of unemployed learners and also has the highest unemployment rate (12%) but the lowest illiteracy rate (7.3%).
- Region 2 also shows a large number of unemployed learners. However, it has a low unemployment rate (8.8%) but the highest illiteracy rate (38.5%).
- Region 6 shows the greatest number of unemployed learners, has a somewhat high unemployment rate (11.1%) and a very high illiteracy rate (24.2%).

Region 1 - Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan, and area
Region 2 - High Level, Fort Vermilion, and area
Region 3 - Fairview, Peace River, and area
Region 4 - Grande Prairie, Valleyview, and area
Region 5 - Grande Cache, Whitecourt, Swan Hills, Fox Creek, and area
Region 6 - Grouard, High Prairie, East Prairie, Slave Lake, and area
Region 7 - Athabasca, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Cold Lake, and area

EDUCATION

The graph below indicates that the majority of literacy learners (71%) have education levels somewhere between Grade 6 and Grade 12. Clearly, most learners are not "severely" illiterate, but are disabled by some degree of functional illiteracy.

Graph 26

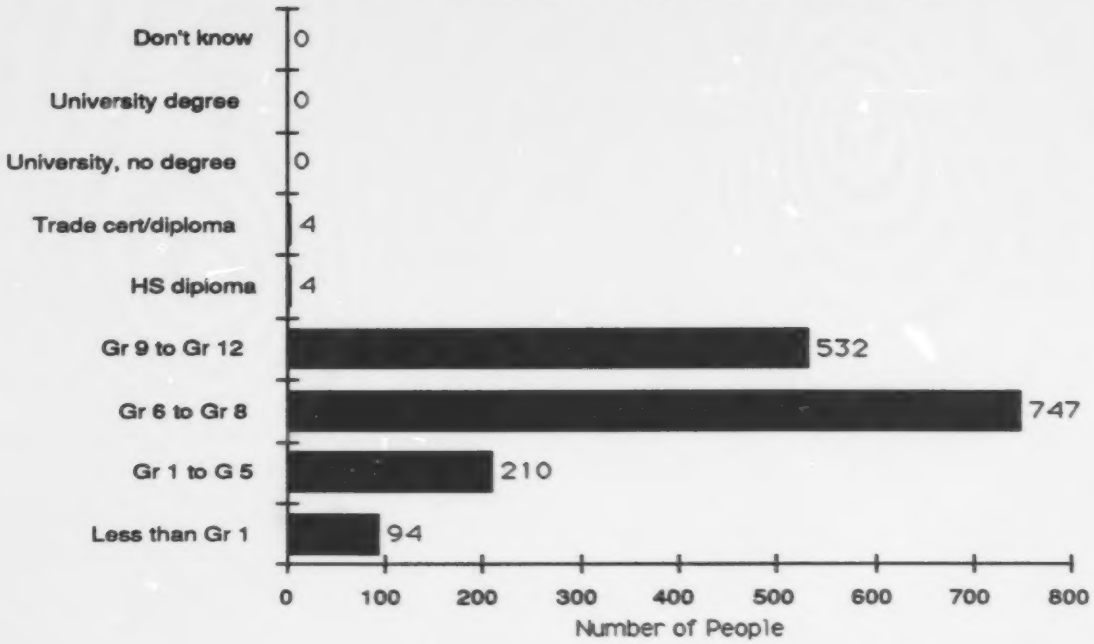


Given that the Grade 9 indicator was used to identify the illiterate population of northern Alberta, it is interesting to note that 38% of the learners have a Grade 9 education level or higher.

When education levels are given according to program type, it becomes evident that ABE learners are more likely to be at a general high school/pre-high school level (80% fall between Grade 6 and Grade 12). This representation may, however, be due to the fact that governments tend to favour upper level sponsorship (Canada Employment only supports programs at a Grade 8 level and beyond), and does not necessarily mean that most illiterates fall into that category. VTP learners, on the other hand, tend to be the least educated, while the higher levels are somewhat more prevalent among the ESL learners, again confirming that they may have attained fairly high levels of education in their home countries.

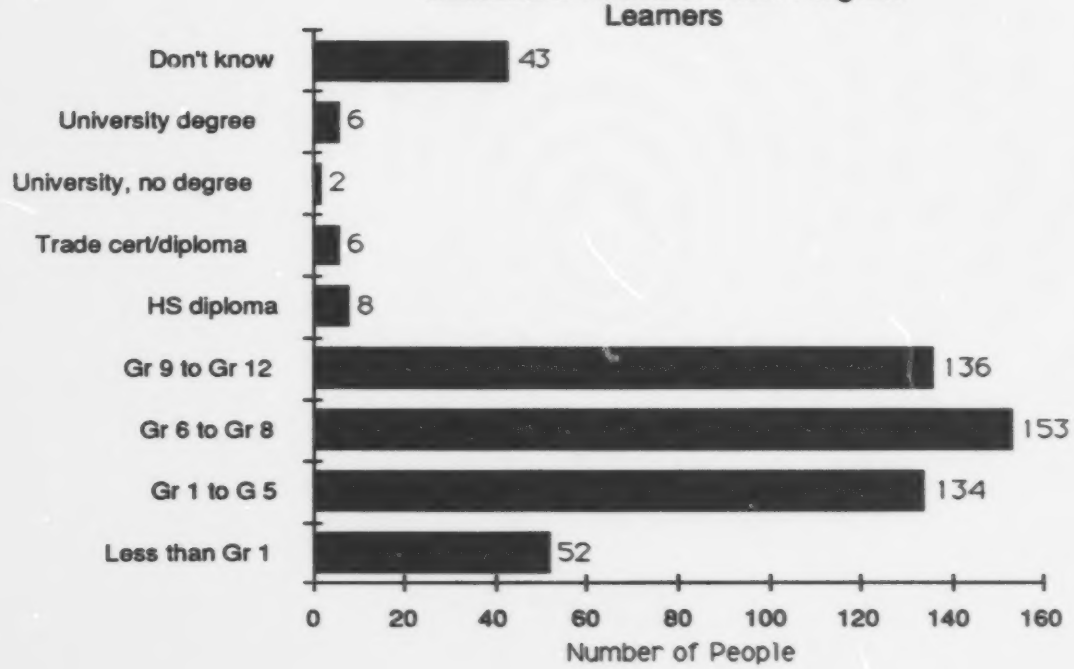
Graph 27

Education: Adult Basic Education Learners

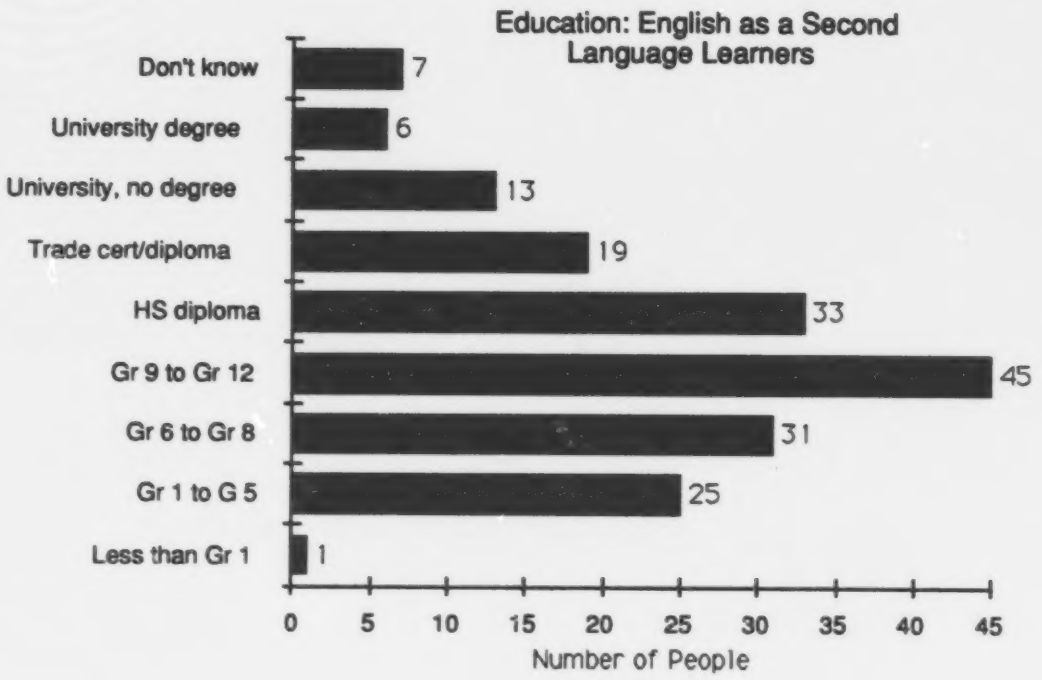


Graph 28

Education: Volunteer Tutor Program Learners



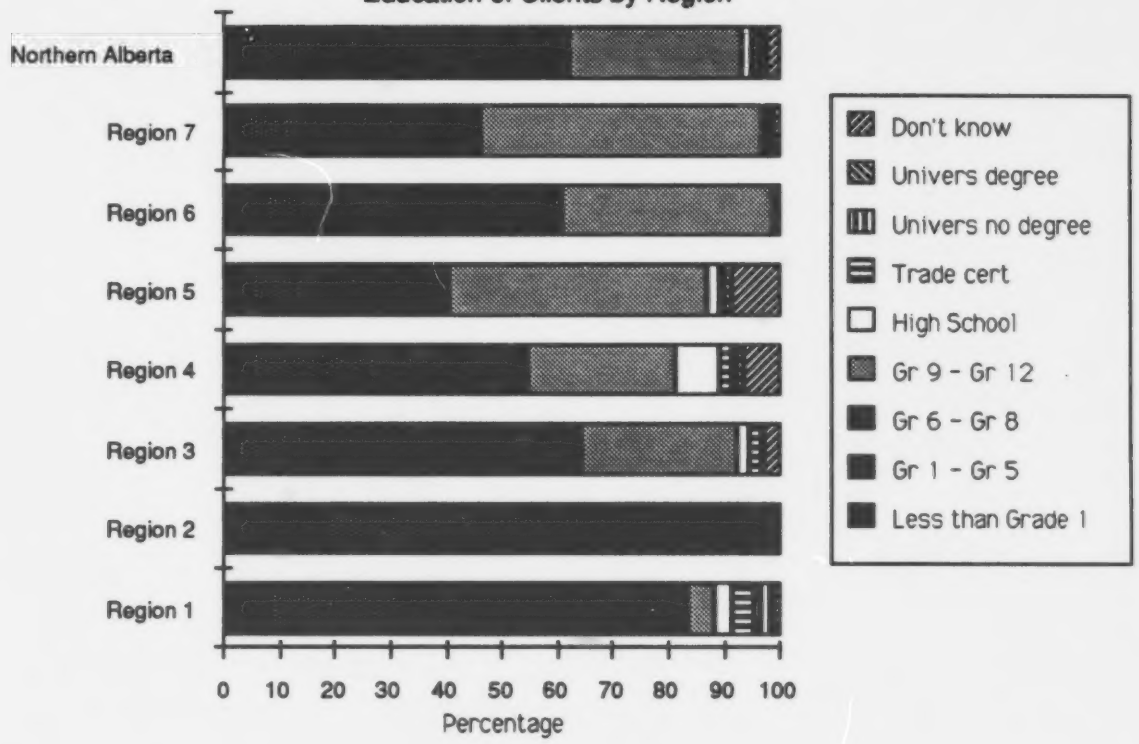
Graph 29


Education: English as a Second Language Learners
Don't know
7
University degree
6
University, no degree
13
Trade cert/diploma
19
HS diploma
33
Gr 9 to Gr 12
45
Gr 6 to Gr 8
31
Gr 1 to G 5
25
Less than Gr 1
1
0
5
10
15
20
25
30
35
40
45
Number of People

Education breakdowns below the Grade 9 level are not available for the population at large, since Canada Census data are not provided for those categories. It is therefore difficult to speculate as to the relationship between the overall education levels of the learner and illiterate populations. However, information on regional education trends does indicate a general relationship in that areas with lower education levels also have higher illiteracy rates (Regions 2, 6, and 3).

Graph 30

Education of Clients by Region



Region 1 - Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan, and area
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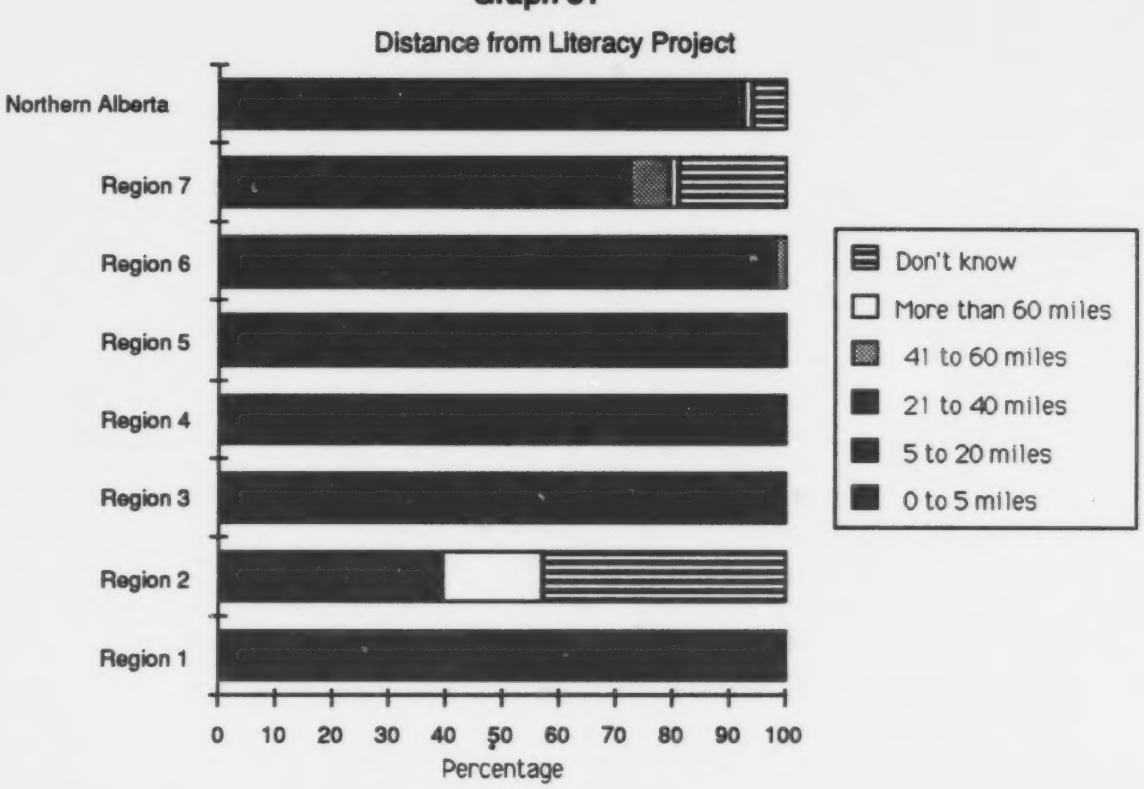
Region 7 - Athabasca, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Cold Lake, and area

DISTANCE FROM PROJECT

Finally, the graph below indicates that most northern learners live fairly close to their literacy classes or tutor. The regions with learners who must travel the furthest for literacy assistance are also the regions with the highest illiteracy rates (Region 2 - 38.5%; Region 7 - 18.5%; Region 6 - 24.2%). These are also among the most remote of all the regions.

Graph 31



Region 1 - Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan, and area
Region 2 - High Level, Fort Vermilion, and area
Region 3 - Fairview, Peace River, and area
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Region 5 - Grande Cache, Whitecourt, Swan Hills, Fox Creek, and area
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CAUSES OF ILLITERACY

It is interesting to see the profile of a typical learner, but it is also important to try to understand why these individuals never learned how to read or write. Pat Larson, of HLA Consultants, asked 82 students in the north this very question. Based on the interview responses, six recurring themes were identified. Causes of illiteracy are related to:

- Schooling experiences
- Family history
- Changes in society
- Languages
- Individual abilities/personal problems

Many individuals repeated multiple causes; the 82 surveyed provided 200 responses.

Causes of Illiteracy

	Frequency of Response	Percent of Total Response
Schooling	77	38.5%
Family History	57	28.5%
Individual Ability/Personal Problems	24	12.0%
Culture and Religion	20	10.0%
Society	15	7.5%
Language	7	3.5%

The results of this analysis indicate that throughout the north, difficulties associated with family and schooling are attributed to the primary reasons for illiteracy.

Literacy learners provided many examples for each of the main reasons.

School related causes for illiteracy included:

- Lack of access to education
- Poor learning environment
- Inappropriate diagnostic and teaching practises
- Curriculum which was irrelevant or lacked an emphasis on literacy skills

The Southam study reports that the curtailment of schooling is the primary factor contributing to illiteracy. In their sample, older students (age 35 plus) cited a variety of impediments that interfered with their schooling. Younger students identified lack of motivation as a major reason for terminating their education.

Family-related causes included lifestyle and family needs which interfered with or competed with education, a history of little or no literacy in the family, and attitudes which didn't value education. Approximately one-third of the students interviewed described their parents as non-readers. The Southam study reports a correlation between parental education and the illiteracy of an adult. According to Southam, there is a 36% chance a person will complete high school if the mother has less than Grade 5, and an 86% chance if the mother is a high school graduate.

SUMMARY

What are the typical characteristics of northern literacy learners? Again, care must be taken not to typecast to the point of misrepresentation. Learners, like illiterate people in general, come from all walks of life.

It would seem, however, that the "typical northern learner" is a female native in her early mid-20's, who is unemployed and who probably left school somewhere around Grade 8. She is most likely an ABE student.

Of course, there are still those employed non-native men (English or otherwise) who are slightly older than the woman just described and who are enrolled in either VTP or ESL programs. Indeed, they probably comprise two more "typical learner" types.

Both populations, individual learners and statistical illiterates, share the 'typical' characteristics of each other in many ways. Perhaps it would be more enlightening to conclude by comparing each trend or trait separately.

- Gender: Most learners are women; most statistical illiterates are men.
- Age: Most learners are under 45; the largest proportion of the illiterate population is over 45.
- First language: The largest proportion of learners are aboriginal speakers, closely followed by English-speakers. Data on the northern population and the northern illiterate population suggests similar trends.
- Employment: Most learners are unemployed. Most statistical illiterates are probably employed, though at a low-skill occupation.
- Education: Most learners and most statistical illiterates did not complete high school.

Between the two populations, there are certain discrepancies. The more crucial discrepancy, however, is between the total number of statistically illiterate northerners (27,715) and the number of literacy learners (2,361).

INVENTORY OF LITERACY SERVICES

INTRODUCTION: OVERVIEW AND HIGHLIGHTS

Although 27,715 northern Alberta adults had less than Grade 9 education in 1986, only 2,361 were enrolled in a literacy project in 1988. Assuming that the illiterate population in northern Alberta has remained relatively constant since the Canada Census was taken in 1986, it is clear that all the literacy needs of northern Albertans are probably not being met.

Are there services available for those who need help? Could it be that some of the "statistical illiterates" simply do not *need* help—either because they really are literate or because they do not need to be literate to "function" in their own environments?

It is not possible from the data available to determine *actual need*. Indeed, while it is probably true that some do not require literacy assistance, it is also possible that there are others with Grade 9 and higher who do. The following are highlights of some of the results:

- For the most part, the programs offered appear suitable, but there are not enough of them. Specifically, there are not enough instructors, tutors, coordinators and coordinating *hours* to go around.
- Of the total 1988 enrollment, 1602 were Adult Basic Education (ABE) learners, 540 were registered in a Volunteer Tutor Program (VTP), and 219 were enrolled in an English as a Second Language (ESL) class.
- Literacy programs are full. Estimated program capacity for the present term is: ABE - 1315, VTP - 497, ESL - 102.
- Many projects do not keep formal waiting lists. Literacy learners *known to be waiting* for space total 487.
- The majority of providers feel that not enough money is being spent. Needs cited include: more staff and staff hours, material resources, space, outreach and promotion campaigns, and student financing, housing and day care.

The following is a brief description of each region and the services available for literacy learners.

Region 1

Fort McMurray is the centre point in Region 1. This area is served by Keyano College, which offers ABE courses in Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan and Janvier. English as a Second Language (ESL) programming is also available in Fort McMurray. Two volunteer tutor projects are operating in Region 1: *Reaching Out* in Fort Chipewyan and *Write Break* in Fort McMurray.

Region 2

Fairview College Northern Region, which has its administrative centre in High Level, serves the communities of Region 2 and provides ABE programming in:

- High Level
- Fort Vermilion
- Paddle Prairie
- La Crete
- Assumption
- Garden River

Fort Vermilion has a volunteer tutor project, the *Northern Region Adult Literacy Project* established in 1977, which serves La Crete and surrounding communities. The *Reading and Writing Tutor Project* serves High Level and Meander River.

Region 3

Peace River is the largest community in this region, which also includes the towns of Manning, Fairview and Grimshaw. The Peace River Consortium and Fairview College provide the majority of academic upgrading courses to these communities of Peace River and Fairview as well as McLennan. The Peace River Correctional Centre also has an ABE program. Two volunteer tutor projects serve the regions and rural areas: *Second Chance Adult Tutoring Project* in Fairview and the Adult Education Centre in Peace River. One ESL program is available in Fairview.

Region 4

Region 4 contains the city of Grande Prairie. ABE classes offered by Grande Prairie Regional College are in Grande Prairie and Hythe. Valleyview ABE comes from AVC Lesser Slave Lake. Four volunteer tutor projects are available in this area: the *Valleyview Adult Literacy for Individual Development*, the Grande Prairie *Reading Network*, the *Grande Prairie Area Literacy Project* and the *Central Peace Literacy Project*. (The latter two projects were not included in the telephone survey; *Central Peace Literacy Project* did not begin until January 1989 and, in 1988, the *Grande Prairie Area Literacy Project* was a part of the *Reading Network*.)

Region 5

Region 5 stretches across the southwest corner of the NADC region and takes in those communities that tend to be less regional in nature: Grande Cache, Fox Creek, Whitecourt and Swan Hills. Each community has its own programming:

- Swan Hills - AVC Lesser Slave Lake (ABE)
  - *W.A.R. (Write and Read) Through Literacy* (VTP)
- Whitecourt - Whitecourt Pembina Consortium (ABE)
  - *Write Soon Literacy Project* (VTP)
- Fox Creek - *Fox Creek Literacy Project* (VTP)
- Grande Cache - Yellowhead Consortium (ABE and ESL)

Region 6

The main trading centers in Region 6 are Slave Lake and High Prairie. Once served by two institutions - AVC Grouard and CVC Slave Lake - the two amalgamated in July 1988. The resulting AVC Lesser Slave Lake serves the entire Lesser Slave Lake area. ABE courses are provided in:

- Slave Lake
- Grouard
- High Prairie
- Atikameg
- Faust
- Joussard
- East Prairie
- Gift Lake
- Peavine
- Kinuso
- Wabasca
- Calling Lake*
- Flatbush
- Trout Lake
- Cadotte Lake
- Smith
- Peerless Lake
- Loon Lake

*Note: Although the community of Calling Lake is included in the boundaries of Region 7, it is counted with Region 6.

This region has two Volunteer Tutor Projects: *Community Reading Projects* out of Slave Lake serves Gift Lake, Calling Lake, Wabasca and Pine Ridge; and *Prairie River Regional Literacy Project* out of High Prairie.

Region 7

Region 7 includes Athabasca, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Bonnyville and Cold Lake/ Grand Centre and area. Two key institutions serve this region: AVC Lac La Biche and Lakeland College. AVC Lac La Biche has academic upgrading (ABE) in the following centres:

- Lac La Biche
- Fishing Lake
- Fort Kent
- St. Paul (stet)
- Frog Lake
- Goodfish Lake
- Cold Lake Reserve
- Elizabeth Settlement
- Saddle Lake
- Athabasca

Lakeland College's *LEARN* tutor project serves a large part of Region 7, with learning centres in:

- Cold Lake/Grand Centre
- St. Paul
- Fort Kent

(LEARN also provides tutor services to four communities outside of the surveyed area: Vegreville, Vermilion, Wainwright and Lloydminster.)

Athabasca has its own VTP, the *Athabasca Adult Basic Literacy Project*. The *Program for Adult Literacy* is available in Lac La Biche.

ESL programs are available from either Lakeland College - Cold Lake or AVC Lac La Biche, as needed.

LITERACY SERVICES: SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

Enrollment Compared to Census Data

The following table compares regional enrollment figures with Canada Census statistics for 1988 enrollment. The accompanying graph highlights the 1988 percentage of people with less than Grade 9 education who are not enrolled in any illiteracy project.

Table 7

1988 Enrollment versus Illiterate Population

Region	1988 Enrollment	Illiterate Population	Percent Illiterate in training
1	267	1,915	13.9
2	168	3,360	5.0
3	379	4,340	8.7
4	313	5,595	5.6
5	158	1,375	11.5
6	683	3,290	20.8
7	393	7,840	5.0
Northern Alberta	2,361	27,715	8.4

Overall northern Alberta provides 8.4% of those identified as "illiterate" with training. Considering that the provincial average is 5%, and the national average is 1.7%, northern Albertans appear to be faring well. (See the appendix for a summary of the percent of learners in courses across Canada).

Region 1 - Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan, and area
Region 2 - High Level, Fort Vermilion, and area
Region 3 - Fairview, Peace River, and area
Region 4 - Grande Prairie, Valleyview, and area
Region 5 - Grande Cache, Whitecourt, Swan Hills, Fox Creek, and area
Region 6 - Grouard, High Prairie, East Prairie, Slave Lake, and area
Region 7 - Athabasca, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Cold Lake, and area

PROJECT DATA

Background

There are 46 literacy-related projects serving northern learners (as of December 1988). Of these, 24 are adult basic education projects, 16 are volunteer tutor projects and 6 are English as a Second Language courses. The following table gives the numbers of each project type serving the regions surveyed.*

Table 8

Number of Projects by Region

Region	Adult Basic Education	Volunteer Tutor Programs	English as a Second Language	Total
1	2	2	1	5
2	3	0	0	3
3	3	2	1	6
4	1	2	1	4
5	2	3	1	6
6	2	2	0	4
7	11	5	2	8

ABE projects are sponsored either by colleges or Alberta Vocational Centres (AVCs). There are 7 of these institutions in northern Alberta:

- Keyano College
- Fairview College
- Grande Prairie Regional College
- AVC Lac La Biche
- AVC Lesser Slave Lake
- North Peace Adult Education Consortium
- Yellowhead Consortium

Pembina Consortium (AVC) offers an ABE program in Whitecourt. Effective July 1988, CVC Slave Lake and AVC Grouard merged and are now AVC Lesser Slave Lake.

NOTE:

* Of the three ABE projects in Region 2, two are listed in the Alberta Advanced Education 1988 *Directory* as VTP (Fort Vermilion Tutor Project and Reading and Writing Tutor Project - High Level). As they appear to have more in common with the ABE structure than the VTP, they have been classified as ABE. A third ABE program, offered in High Level, is not listed in the *Directory*. Information on that project was not available. Nor was information on AVC Lac La Biche's ESL project, in Region 7, obtained.

Region 1 - Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan, and area
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Volunteer tutor projects are usually sponsored by local Further Education Councils (FEC), but may be co-sponsored by an institution. ESL projects may be institutionally or FEC sponsored.

Most ABEs were started in the early to mid-1970s. Six of AVC Lac La Biche's eight native outreach projects began in the early 1980s. The other two started in 1988. Keyano College initiated its ABE program in 1965. The Peace River Correctional Centre began providing ABE courses in 1986.

Four VTPs were established in 1988. With the exception of the Fort Vermilion VTP, which started in 1972, the rest were initiated in the early to mid-1980s.

The five ESL programs were also predominantly started in the 1980s, with the exception of Fort McMurray's, which began in 1970.

All of the projects were initiated as a result of a recognized need for literacy services by the local communities. The need was usually seen by individuals and institutions alike and was almost always readily acknowledged by government.

Staff

There are currently 93 full-time and 50 part-time staff people employed in ABE programs. Of these, 119 are instructors (about one third are part-time), and 15 are paid one-to-one tutors.

Fourteen of the 16 VTPs are managed by part-time coordinators working between 15 and 20 *paid* hours per week. (Most put in two to five hours of unpaid overtime each week). Two VTPs have full-time coordinators (Slave Lake and Grande Prairie). VTPs currently have a total of 432 tutors. Voluntary Advisory Councils/Boards assist coordinators with VTP administration and usually consist of five to eight Board members.

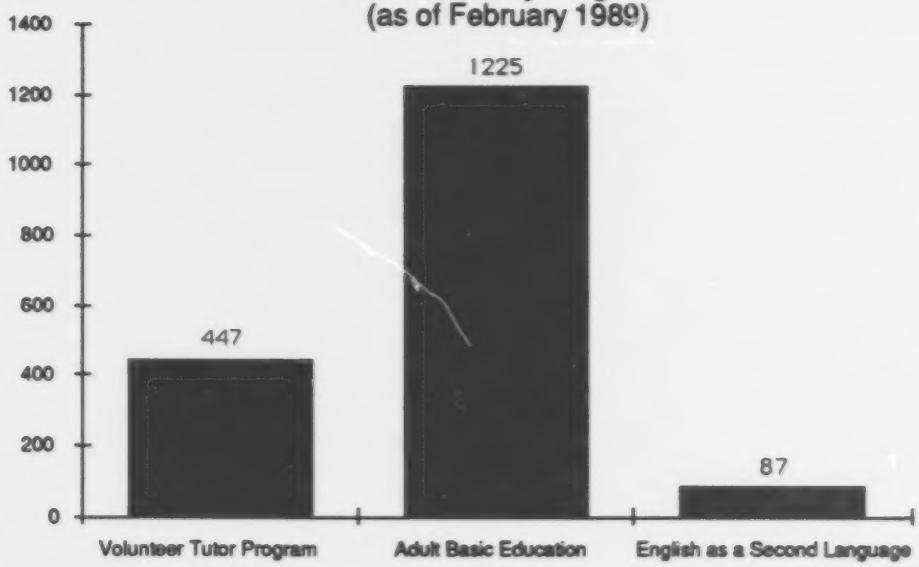
The ESL staff of seven includes six full-time instructors.

Learners

As shown in the graph below, the majority of literacy learners currently enrolled in northern Alberta programs are ABE students. ABE learners total 1,225; VTP learners total 447, while ESL *classroom* learners total 87. (ABE/VTP supported ESL learners total 142. Thus, there are really 229 ESL learners enrolled in literacy projects.)

Graph 32

Enrollment by Program
(as of February 1989)



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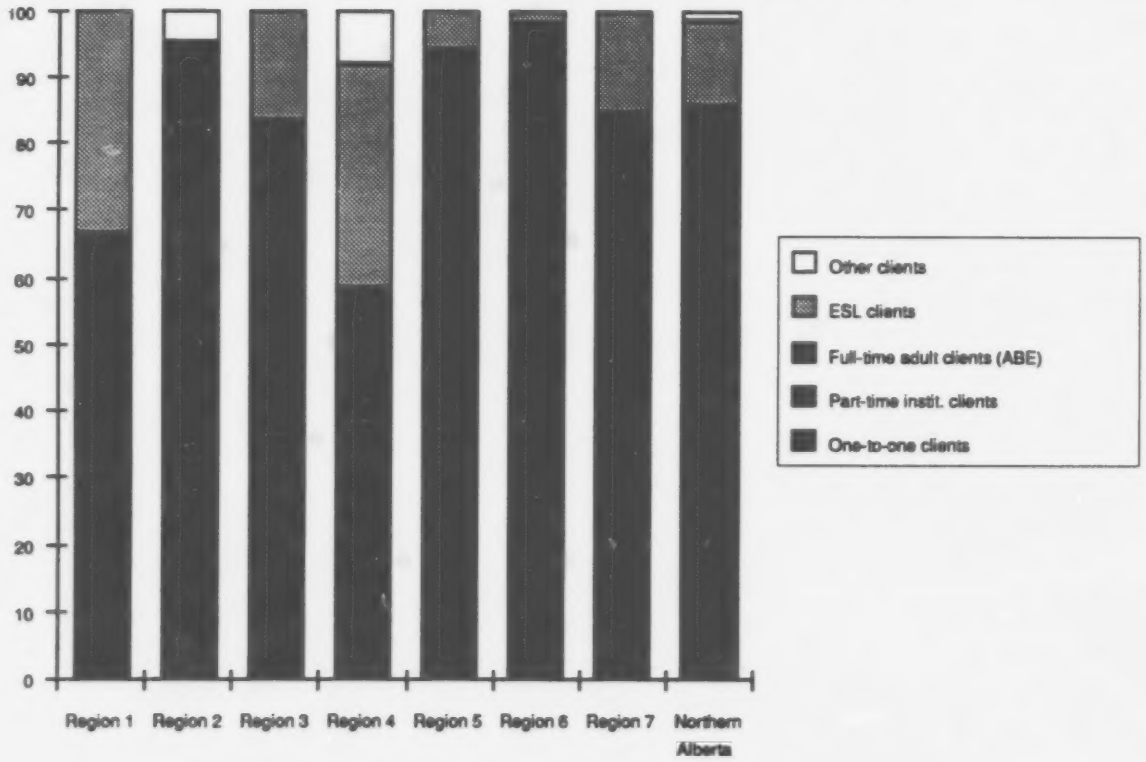
ABE learners also dominate the current enrollment in every region, with the exception of Region 4.

Graph 33

Enrollment by Region (%)
(% of learners enrolled in types of programs)



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Waiting lists

The following provides information on the number of students on waiting lists and the total project capacities for each of the three types.

Table 9
Wait Lists

	Adult Basic Education	Volunteer Tutor Programs	English as a Second Language
One-to-One	6	76	0
Part-time Instit. clients	68	3	0
Full-time Adult Clients	301	0	0
ESL Clients	12	4	7
Other Clients	0	10	0
Total	387	93	7

Table 10
Program Capacities

	Adult Basic Education	Volunteer Tutor Programs	English as a Second Language
One-to-One	27	375	0
Part-time Instit. clients	62	29	0
Full-time Adult Clients	1171	0	0
ESL Clients	47	78	102
Other Clients	8	15	0
Total	1315	497	102

Referrals

The vast majority of literacy learners learn about the programs through word-of-mouth, as shown by the table following.

Table 11
Attracting Clients

	Adult Basic Education	Volunteer Tutor Programs	English as a Second Language	Total
Word of Mouth	664	176	10	850
Advertising/Promotions	174	86	47	307
Referrals	291	139	30	460
Other	58	41	0	99
Not Known	38	5	0	43

The majority of the referrals come from Canada Employment Centres, Alberta Career Centres, Indian Affairs and Alberta Social Services and are most likely directed toward ABE programs. Much of the advertising is done by way of newspapers and brochures—perhaps not the most appropriate means, given that the students have limited reading skills. The 'other' category primarily includes referrals from other literacy projects, and high schools.

These figures show that most learners enroll in literacy projects on their own initiative. What motivates them? This question was not asked and most providers do not keep statistics on motivation. The literature and general comments both suggest that the primary motivation is economic or employment-related. Others include the more personal objectives of self-improvement, wanting to feel a part of mainstream society and just wanting "to get my Grade 12."

Drop-out rates

The survey questioned each project on drop outs. The following rates were reported:

- ESL 9%
- ABE 25%
- VTP 20%

The main variation occurs in Regions 5 and 6. Pembina Consortium's Whitecourt ABE program (Region 5) has a drop-out rate of 50%; AVC Grouard (Region 6) has a rate of 80%. The rate for the Swan Hills VTP (Region 5) is 50%, while the Slave Lake VTP (Region 6) has a 40% drop-out rate. The rates for the remaining ABEs and VTPs are generally between 15%-25% and 10%-20% respectively.

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Why do learners drop out? Athough this question was not asked specifically some respondents did venture opinions. Occasionally, learners 'graduate' to higher level programs or leave because they get the kinds of jobs they want. Those are the success stories and they probably comprise some 25% of the total. Most leave their programs early because of financial and/or family difficulties and stress. Many simply can't afford to go to school. Some VTP learners leave if they are not given a tutor after two or three months on a waiting list. Some ABE students are placed in levels too high for their own abilities and leave out of frustration. (This could be because most of the government sponsored seats are between Grades 7 and 9, since Canada Employment does not sponsor below the Grade 8 level. There may not be enough spaces for learners with lower education levels.)

PROJECTS AND FUNDING

Amount of Funding

How much money is spent on literacy services in northern Alberta by governments and other agencies? The information obtained from individual projects was, unfortunately, limited. Some respondents were uncertain of their actual budgets and funding, but did offer estimates.

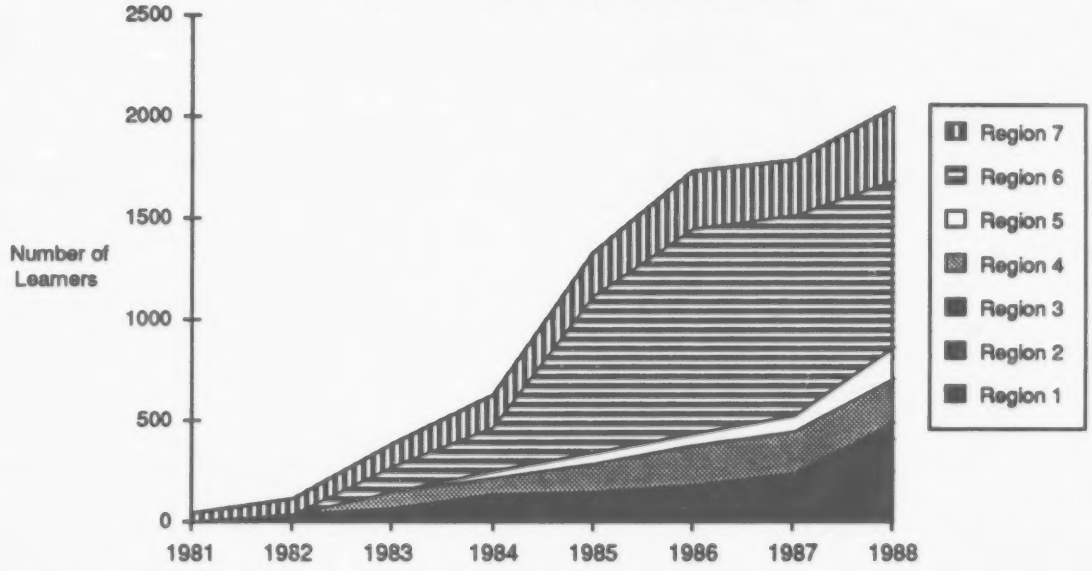
The figures were so varied and estimated that no conclusions can be drawn.

Project Development

Not all respondents were able to answer questions regarding the development of their projects over the past decade. Most provided data on enrollment and the following graphs establish that some development has taken place. This is especially true for the VTP component since many VTPs did not get started until the mid 1980s or later.

Graph 34

Program Enrollment by Region and Year



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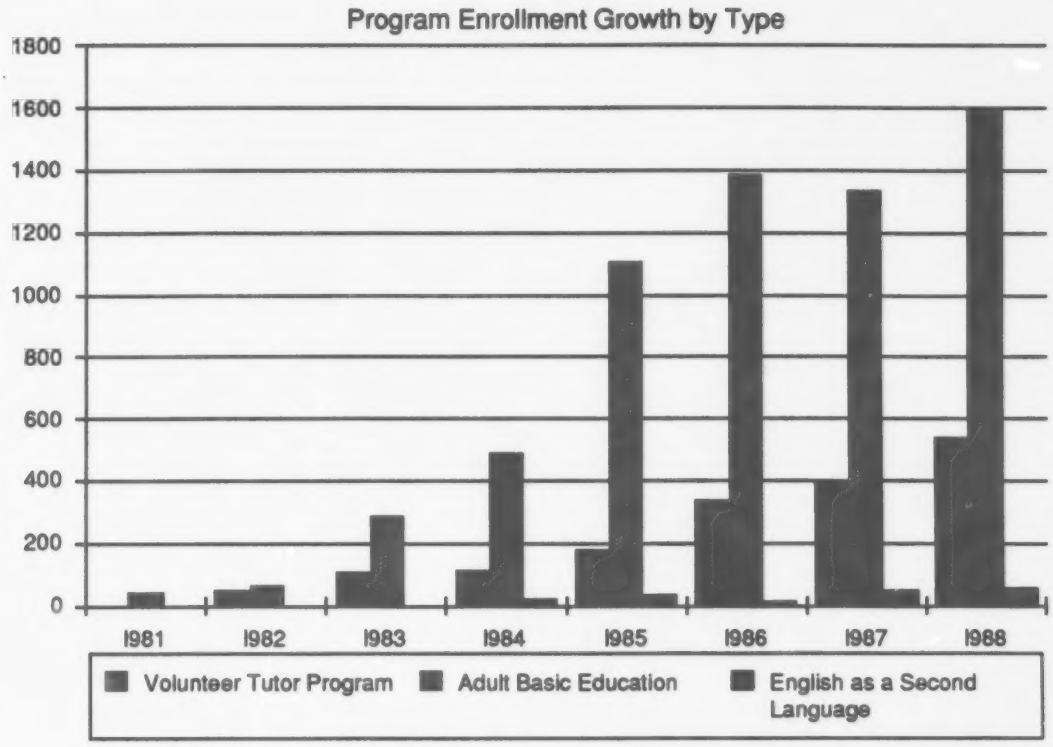
Graph 35


Program Enrollment Growth by Type
1800
1600
1400
1200
1000
800
600
400
200
0
1981
1982
1983
1984
1985
1986
1987
1988
Volunteer Tutor Program
Adult Basic Education
English as a Second Language

Project Support: What Makes Literacy Services Work?

To identify some of the key ingredients necessary to successful literacy services, providers were asked todescribe the greatest support for or strength of their project. By far the most frequentanswer given had to do with the people involved.

- VTP respondents generally felt the **dedication** of the volunteer tutors lay at the heart ofthe project. "For them, literacy is a cause."
- VTPs also receive invaluable assistance from their **steering committees** and Further Education Councils, the Literacy Coordinators of Alberta, the Alberta Assocation for Adult Literacy and, for those who belong, LEARN (the LakelandCollege Literacy Network).
- One coordinator of a VTP put primary emphasis on the **students** themselves who, she stressed, are "equal partners" in the tutoring relationship. Student enthusiasm and commitment were also noted, occasionally by ABE respondents and more often by ESL respondents.
- For ABE and ESL projects alike, the **dedication** of the instructors and institutional staff was frequently praised. Many emphasized the special value of instructor continuity.
- Support of the **sponsor institution**—the AVC or college—was also a source of strergth for ABE and ESL programs alike, especially in the provision of accounting, clerical, reception and administrative sources.
- The coordinator of an Occupational English as a Second Language (OESL) program stressed that the **support of the college** and community in the OESL immersion program was the key to her project's success. (To supplement classroom instruction, students were assigned work placements.)
- All three program types tended to find that **community interest** and involvement was a source of support, though some projects did not have as much support as others. Many also found interagency groups and government sources to be helpful, especially in terms of student referrals.

The other area of support or strength had to do with the very programs themselves. In general, respondents felt their projects were able to respond to the need in the most appropriate way.

- Flexibility, adaptability, informality, confidentiality and the one-to-one tutor approach were all major strengths of the VTPs.
- Similar characteristics were noted for ABE services, despite their institutional settings. Several respondents said that assessment now helped to ensure that learners were appropriately placed and also stressed the importance of allowing learners to study at a variety of levels within one program.
- All three project types tend to emphasize the "whole person approach". ESL programs try to offer some settlement services, while ABE courses often include life skills and personal career counselling. VTP learners are actively engaged in developing their own individualized programs and benefit from the intimate nature of the one-to-one approach.

Additional worthwhile supports that were individually mentioned, included the provision of *day care, student housing, access to computers* and *a good media centre* .

PROJECT NEEDS: HOW CAN LITERACY SERVICES BE IMPROVED?

To determine how present literacy services might be improved, respondents were asked to identify obstacles preventing more effective services as well as project needs.

Obstacles

Within *volunteer tutor projects* the major obstacles centred upon difficulties recruiting learners and tutors, as well as serving those registered in the projects, in appropriate and satisfactory ways.

- Several VTPs blamed **inadequate advertising** for limited learner recruitment. Newspapers are the least expensive avenues, but also produce the least effective results, since most potential learners either don't read or read very little. Television advertising would be more effective but is too expensive.
- Potential learners continue to experience a certain **social stigma** with respect to their disability. This is slowly decreasing, but reluctance to step forward remains a major obstacle.
- Several VTPs felt that volunteers need more encouragement. One coordinator noted a **limited base of volunteers** in her community. Perhaps there are simply not enough volunteers to go around.
- One coordinator worried that the **general low level of education** in her community means that even her volunteer tutors are often poorly educated.
- It was generally felt that **lack of adequate public awareness** of the urgent need for literacy, the individual and societal effects of illiteracy and the widespread nature of the problem, is still an obstacle.

Related to these obstacles was the often repeated concern that VTP coordinators, who are predominately **part-time providers**, were simply not able to spend enough time getting the job done.

- Most coordinators felt they are not spending enough time on recruitment and community awareness—speaking to different groups and developing strong liaisons with other agencies, for example.
- Coordinators are also worried that not enough energy is directed towards learner-tutor support for example, monitoring matches, developing resource librarians, training tutors (initially and continuously), and pursuing their own professional development so they are better able to accomplish these tasks.
- An obstacle connected to the preceding one is that almost all coordinators believe they are spending far too much time on administrative and clerical duties—typing, photocopying, budgeting and accounting—and fundraising.

The *adult basic education* obstacles frequently cited were often related to funding difficulties - for the programs themselves and for learners seeking literacy services. With the former, the *ad hoc* nature of a large portion of program funding is, perhaps, partly responsible.

- *Ad hoc* funding basically translates into *program instability*.
  - Long-range planning is impossible.
  - Short-range planning is impaired. (Funding decisions can be made as late as one week before program start-dates.)
- Instructor continuity is threatened. (Instructors are hired on a contract-to-contract basis; they have no job security, no benefits and little economic incentive to stay.)
- *Ad hoc* funding may also be at the root of what ABE providers see as insufficient commitment to the legitimacy of literacy and academic upgrading programs.
- The instructor of an AVC community outreach service, which provides literacy to Indian reserves and Metis settlements, was especially concerned about *ad hoc* funding, since it seems to make cut-backs much easier. (Some programs have been informed that *ad hoc* program funding will be provided on a two-year basis only, effective the 1989/90 academic year. On-going programs dependent upon *ad hoc* funding could be affected.)

ABE difficulties with learner recruitment and drop-out rates were primarily felt to be due to insufficient financial assistance for learners.

- There is very little support for basic level learners. Canada Employment does not finance learners below the Grade 8 level; nor are Canada Student Loans or grants available to learners with lower education levels.
- There is a widespread lack of assistance to underemployed people and those who can attend classes on a part-time basis only. Financing for full-time courses is usually limited to the unemployed. Also, unstable employment conditions mean people are less inclined to leave jobs for upgrading.
- Support for families is inadequate. Day care, babysitting and appropriate housing were all cited as major issues.
- Inadequate student financing can place additional stresses upon the learners, hindering the learning process itself.
- A provider of literacy training for natives reported his project's major obstacle to be jurisdictional prohibition of provincial funding for on-reserve low-level literacy programs.

Obstacles preventing more effective *English As a Second Language* services were often similar to those encountered by many ABE providers. *Ad hoc* funding is again a difficulty, as is insufficient financial assistance to ESL learners and their families.

Needs

The needs identified by respondents most often had to do with staffing needs. Expanded programs, better materials and a wide variety of teaching methods were the next frequently mentioned needs.

- Almost all VTP respondents expressed the need for a *full-time coordinator position*. Some providers were interested in establishing a full-time position shared by two part-time coordinators. Many thought a full-time coordinator position plus an *administrative assistant* was necessary, while others thought they could manage on a part-time basis if they had sufficient administrative and clerical assistance.
- ABE and ESL providers also saw a need for increased staffing. Some felt the need for *clerical/administrative assistance*; others received such support from their college or AVC. Almost all stressed the need for *more instructors and/or instructor/hours*, especially at the lower levels.
- All three saw the need to increase and upgrade their *resources*—from larger *libraries* with more Canadian content, to *computers*, to *resource rooms* and *teacher-aides*. Upgrading *skills* through *professional development* is also a priority.
- All three types of programs generally need to be *expanded*. Two VTPs would like to see *year-round VTP services*. Two respondents indicated the need for more *outreach*, and this was echoed by another respondent, who specified the need for *Native programs* and also suggested that classroom teaching should be supplemented by *job placement/work experience* components.
- A significant number of ABE respondents (and one ESL provider) emphasized the need to provide more *stable and continuous funding*—perhaps by replacing or supplementing *ad hoc* funding with an increase in base funding.

Along with the preceding, a number of "indirect" needs, related to project support were cited as essential to improving literacy services in general.

- VTP respondents especially felt that literacy should be more *widely promoted* and that methods for *recruiting learners and volunteers*, as well as *increasing public awareness*, must be improved.
- Frequently mentioned was the need for more *student financial support*. Poverty and inadequate student allowances are both major disincentives to seeking help.
- Several ABE respondents thought that *part-time programming* and *support for part-time learners* should help overcome the poverty obstacle, especially for those who can't or won't leave their jobs. Others suggested *work-site literacy programs* as an obvious alternative.
- Finally, funding must support the needs of the *"whole student"*. For many providers, this means *day care* and *family housing* for those who must move to larger centres to attend classes.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR LITERACY PROGRAMS

OVERVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Representatives from provincial and federal departments were either visited or contacted by telephone to obtain information on their literacy, ABE or ESL programs. The topics covered included the types of programs offered, funding criteria and methodology, and the overall demand or need. Statistical information was also sought.

The departments contacted were:

- Alberta Education - Community and International Education
- Alberta Advanced Education - Community Programs
  -Provincially Administered Institutions (PAI) Management Support
- Alberta Career Development and Employment - Vocational Training Programs
- Canada Employment and Immigration - Employment Training, Adjustment Programs Branch
- Canada Indian and Northern Affairs - Economic and Employment Development
- Canada Secretary of State - Literacy Program
- Canada/Alberta Northern Development Agreement

Information highlights included the following points:

- Most agreed that the demand or need for literacy services exceeded the supply; they disagreed as to the size of the gap.
- All but Indian Affairs seemed confident that their department was basically fulfilling its share of the literacy mandate adequately and appropriately.
- Indian Affairs representatives felt especially financially constrained, perhaps due to an apparent jurisdictional gap. Indian Affairs (on-reserve services and Native financial assistance) is a federal matter, but education (including literacy) is provincially administered *and* primarily funded at the provincial level. Alberta *can't* target funds for treaty Natives and Canada doesn't provide enough. Indian Affairs is presently working to overcome this difficulty and to determine the most appropriate means for meeting the needs of treaty Indians.

- The greatest restriction noted by all was money—or the lack thereof—followed by grade level restrictions. Canada Employment does not support seats or students below the Grade 8 level.
- Within the confines of mandated boundaries, there appeared to be some flexibility when implementing the various programs. The degree of flexibility varied from program to program.
- Rather than actively solicit new initiatives, programs traditionally tended towards a more responsive approach. However, Secretary of State and Indian Affairs have recently begun to be more actively engaged and, for the past five years, Alberta's Advanced Education has been encouraging local Further Education Councils to become involved in adult literacy.
- Departments with an education or advocacy mandate tended to be more sympathetic, flexible and committed to literacy as a *cause* than did those departments whose mandates were more or less employment-related.

The following is a general summary of the information obtained. Individual department summaries are provided in an appendix. It must be noted that Secretary of State does not fund project operating costs and that Alberta Education supports no projects in the region of study. The summary, therefore, omits information obtained from these two departments.

AREAS OF ASSISTANCE

Government dollars are used to finance the three main literacy areas - volunteer tutor projects, adult basic education classes and English as a Second Language services. Support itself is divided into two areas: assistance to programs and assistance to students.

Of the departments surveyed, Alberta Advanced Education was the most extensively involved in literacy *programs*. The Community Programs Branch is responsible for VTP funding and will provide *ad hoc* dollars to Further Education Councils offering ESL courses. Base grants to Alberta Vocational Centres, which offer most ABE courses, come from Advanced Education's PAI Management support. (Further Education Councils may also offer ABE courses, provided they are less than 100 hours in length. The FECs receive no additional *ad hoc* dollars to do so, but must pay for the courses from out of their own base grants, which are also provided by Advanced Education.) Advanced Education does not, however, support individual students.

Student financial assistance and ABE/ESL funding are both available through Alberta Career Development and Employment and Canada Employment and Immigration. With each, *program* support is offered on an *ad hoc* basis, in the form of seat purchases. (Entire programs or partial programs may be financed this way.) *Individual student* assistance includes tuition coverage, most supplies, and training allowances, usually calculated according to need.

The department of Indian and Northern Affairs (INA) has the mandate to finance all three types of services and can support *programs* and *students* alike. (Programs must be on-reserve and students must be treaty Indians.) The mandate is implemented on an *ad hoc* basis. Limited funds mean that few students receive INA training allowances, while even fewer reserves offer literacy services.

PROGRAM FUNDING

All the departments surveyed were asked for their most recent annual budget, for northern Alberta and Alberta as a whole. The statistics obtained were limited. The *ad hoc* nature of many programs and the fact that no department kept data on the north region separately made accuracy impossible.

Advance Education provided information on Alberta government-funded literacy services in the province.

	Budget in $ millions
Alberta Advanced Education	$18
Alberta Education	$10
Career Development and Employment	$17
	$45 million

Of the $18 million budget for Advanced Education, $707,000 is spent annually on Volunteer Tutor Projects through Community Programs.

The Canada/Alberta Northern Development Agreement in the past three years has provided gap funding for northern literacy projects. The Agreement has assisted in the establishment of two programs and the expansion of three others. The value of the literacy funding from the Agreement on an annual basis is about $120,000.

In addition, the federal government supports literacy training through Employment and Immigration Canada ($2.2 million) and Indian and Northern Affairs ($1.5 million).

FUNDING CRITERIA

Common to all programs is the provision that students served must be adults, which is usually considered to be 18 years of age and older. Most programs will admit younger students, providing the student does not clearly fit into the regular school system (for example, a sixteen year old single parent).

Other criteria depend upon the type of program funded.

VTP funding - Since community programs will not fund credit courses or capital expenditures, these restrictions apply to volunteer tutor projects. Otherwise, there are very few strings attached to VTP funding. Programs may admit all adults requesting literacy assistance; there are no grade level or employment restrictions.

ABE program funding - Both base and *ad hoc* funds support programs that assist adults who are unable to take advantage of mainstream employment, education and societal opportunities. These programs may or may not lead to a high school diploma. In general, they are designed to increase student employability.

Institutions have some flexibility with regard to specific courses within base-funded programs while *ad hoc* funds are generally tied to the courses or programs funded. (*Ad hoc* funds are also more restrictive with respect to the employability factor: they are intended for unemployed, unskilled, undereducated students. Canada Employment is most restrictive in that it does not fund below the grade 8 level.) *Ad hoc* funded courses must be less than one year in length.

ABE student support - To receive financial assistance, students must be enrolled in a full-time ABE program. They must be adults, unemployed, unskilled and "labour market destined" (as opposed to university). They must be referred by a vocational counsellor. With the exception of those receiving assistance from Canada Employment (who receive either a training allowance or unemployment insurance, whichever is higher), assistance is awarded and calculated on the basis of need. Students may receive assistance from Canada Employment, Indian Affairs, Career Development and Employment or Alberta Social Services (not one of the departments surveyed).

ESL program funding - Funding for ESL classes comes primarily from the Community Programs Branch of Advanced Education or Canada Employment and Immigration. The former is provided to Further Education Councils on an *ad hoc* basis and the latter to post-secondary institutions as the need arises. Although Indian Affairs has a mandate to provide ESL services as well, it generally has not the funds to do so. All courses must be designed to help students acquire English language proficiency; students can be immigrants and Canadian-born non-English speakers. Canada Employment and Immigration also provides funding to support home bound recent arrivals via one-to-one tutoring through its Settlement Language Training Program. This program is not widely used because funding is very limited and very *ad hoc*. SLTP funds are awarded to volunteer tutor projects.

ESL student support - ESL student support is available through various government departments in the form of training allowances, tuition coverage, and so on. Canada Employment does not treat the management of ESL assistance any differently than that of ABE assistance - the criteria are basically the same.

FUNDING METHODOLOGY

Volunteer tutor projects must be sponsored by Further Education Councils. The councils submit grant applications to Community Programs each December, along with the year-end report. To ensure equal access, Community Programs accepts all applications for funds, rather than concentrating funds on only a few projects. (This also means others are spread thinly and that individual amounts do not reflect the specific needs of individual projects.)

ABE base funding is administered much the way that grants to college and universities are administered. Programs are approved according to a Program Approval Policy process, which ensures that eligibility criteria are met. ABE *ad hoc funding* takes the form of seat purchases by Canada Employment, Career Development and Employment, or Indian Affairs. Though the departments can commission programs, institutions usually develop programs and initiate the sale of seats.

ESL funding is awarded on receipt of applications to either Community Programs or Canada Employment.

Student financial assistance is likewise awarded upon receipt of applications to the applicable department. Most student assistance programs require the student to undergo vocational counseling prior to receiving assistance. The exception is Unemployment Insurance, which has its own set of rules and regulations.

Funding methodologies for all departments were predominantly passive in that there was little effort made to solicit applications beyond the normal departmental communication channels and referral services.

CLIENT DEMANDS AND LITERACY NEEDS

Even though most of those surveyed felt they were able to accommodate demand fairly well, all perceived the need for literacy services to be much greater than the demand placed upon their own particular departments.

Community Programs funds all of the applications it receives, while all provincially administered institutions also receive government funding; neither are necessarily at the levels desired. Career Development and Employment accepts about half of the requests it receives; some applications must be rejected because they don't meet the eligibility requirements, while lack of funds means others must be "negotiated down". Canada Employment is able to accept most applications that meet its criteria, but is completely unable to meet the demand for funding below the grade 8 level. For this reason, it was felt by some representatives, many institutions tend to de-emphasize the ABE components of their academic upgrading programs.

The representative from Indian Affairs stressed that his department was so inadequately funded it was unable to meet the present demand to any significant degree. He felt Indian Affairs needed ten times its present budget and then years of funding via the band delivery system to bring the Native illiteracy rate to the current non-Native rate. It was estimated that almost all Natives need literacy support of one kind or another.

A representative from Advanced Education, Provincially Administered Programs, noted that, although the level of literacy in the north may have increased over the past few years, the demand for literacy skills has increased even more, particularly on the part of industry. It is still difficult to keep up with the demand. The new forestry developments were cited as an example, in that the mills currently being built will employ only those with grade 12 or its equivalent. Many northerners are attempting to achieve that level before the mills begin hiring. (This example was also cited by some of the respondents to the telephone survey.)

INDIRECT PROGRAM SUPPORT

Volunteer tutor projects receive indirect program support through government funding of special projects and/or those organizations which provide professional development and information services to coordinators. Funding for such projects and programs is shared by Advanced Education's Community Programs and Secretary of State's Literacy Program, on a 50/50 basis.

It is through this avenue that Alberta has access to the $110 million five-year federal literacy plan announced in September 1988. Under this agreement, the province of Alberta received $500,000 for the 1988/89 fiscal year and will receive $1,000,000 for each of the remaining four years. The total amount of recommended expenditures for the northern region for 1988/89 is $141,663.00.

Both the Alberta Association for Adult Literacy and the Literacy Coordinators of Alberta receive government support in this way. A variety of special projects, devoted to coordinator and tutor training, student outreach and promotional activities, are also funded. Further details regarding these projects, as well as Secretary of State's involvement in literacy, are provided in the appendices.

CONCLUSION

A number of general conclusions can be drawn from the investigation into the government programs.

- All seven government departments have a fairly good understanding of the need for literacy education in general, and of their own roles and responsibilities in particular.
- The mechanism for sponsoring full-time students is firmly in place.
- There is no mechanism for sponsoring part-time students. This represents a fundamental gap in the system.
- The lack of Canada Employment funding of seats under the Grade 8 level represents another gap, one that is only partially met by other sources.
- The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs may be primarily responsible for what is likely another major gap—adequate support for native students.
- The *ad hoc*/base funding of ABE programs, coupled with the fact that funding is shared by so many sources, makes the entire ABE system difficult to understand.
- Volunteer Tutor Projects receive only 1.6% of the total Alberta government committed dollars to literacy training ($707,000 verses $45 million).
- Some programs have been informed that *ad hoc* funding for some institutions may be in jeopardy. It appears that some institutions have used *ad hoc* funding to supplement base funding when the latter is insufficient. As of 89/90 academic year, institutions may receive *ad hoc* funding for the same programs for two years only.

NORTHERN LITERACY ISSUES

By any standard or definition, illiteracy is an area of concern that affects many Canadians. In northern Alberta, the statistically illiterate population is significant both in numbers and scope. The northern illiteracy rate of 16.5% is over half again the provincial rate of 10.8%. Only one of the seven regions surveyed has an illiteracy rate that is less than the provincial norm (Region 1 - 7.3%).

Statistical data presents a profile of northern "illiterates" which suggest that they are often older, male, native and unskilled or low skilled workers. On the other hand, project information reveals that the literacy learners are often young, unemployed and female. Natives continue to dominate enrollment figures.

Program-wise, Alberta has a reputation that can be envied. Provincial programs are considered to be among the best in the country. This is partly due to the fact that literacy projects are not concentrated in large urban centres but found in many northern communities. Alberta's north has over 46 projects providing literacy services to northerners, which in 1988 numbered 2,361 learners. Many of the projects are *learner-centred* and *community-based* which allows them flexibility and adaptability. These qualities indicate the recognition that illiteracy is both an individual disability and a community problem.

While there is much activity and many successes to be proud of there are still some areas of concern. The following issues have been identified in the report and need to be addressed if northern Alberta is to adequately deal with illiteracy.

LITERACY AWARENESS

Opportunities and options are limited for those who are illiterate. It is a disability at both the individual and community level. There is a lack of awareness by the general public of the immensity or the consequences of this problem. Greater public awareness will encourage more involvement and reduce the stigma attached to literacy. Evidence has shown that 71% of the students presently in literacy training learned about the program by word of mouth or through referrals. Twenty percent responded to advertisements or promotions. Appropriate and effective means of literacy promotions need to take place. People who can't read aren't as likely to respond to an ad in the newspaper as they are to a television spot. Increased awareness will serve a variety of purposes:

- Attract potential students by making them aware of the service available
- Reduce the stigma of illiteracy
- Encourage others to get involved perhaps by volunteer tutoring
- Gain the support, both in principal and financial, of community groups and organizations.

TARGETING LITERACY LEARNERS

Profiles of the typical literacy learner and the typical "illiterate" are very different. The majority of learners are young, unemployed women. The census data shows the majority of people with less than Grade 9 education are older, employed men. While it is important to ensure our young people receive a basic education, there is a large population who require services and that aren't receiving them.

Of course, there are those individuals who have more than nine years of school who may also be illiterate; 38% of those in literacy training in 1988 had Grade 9 or higher. They have needs as well that should be identified.

LEARNER SUPPORT

Many of those interviewed indicated a concern over the amount of support available to literacy students.

- Employment and Immigration Canada doesn't support learners below the Grade 8 level.
- There is no assistance available to part time learners; learners must be full time students to receive funding.

In addition to student financing, other concerns such as housing and day care are major issues with adult learners. These concerns are key factors that affect overall student success and are cited by literacy administrators and coordinators as the primary reasons for drop out rates.

VOLUNTEER TUTOR PROJECT SUPPORT

According to the literacy project survey, northern Alberta has 16 VTPs and 24 ABE programs. (Two new VTPs in Region 4 that were not included in the survey , the Central Peace Literacy Project and the Grande Prairie Area Literacy Project, would raise the number of VTPs to 18.) The community-based volunteer tutor projects employ coordinators, usually on a part-time basis, and rely extensively on the use of volunteers. Yet provincially, they receive only 1.6% of the overall Alberta government dollars spent on literacy training. VTPs provide flexible and adaptable programming and meet the special needs of illiterates who may be home bound or work shifts – and they provide all of this in a very cost-effective manner. An often repeated concern was that VTP coordinators are not able to spend enough time getting the job done. Tutor projects need additional financial support, particularly in the area of staffing. Part time coordinators spend much of their time on administrative and clerical duties and fund raising rather than on learner-tutor support and recruitment, and public awareness. That VTPs need help is evidenced by the requests for financial assistance from the Canada/Alberta Northern Development Agreement, a program which has provided gap funding to some literacy projects. Clearly the financial needs are not being met at present.

Region 1 - Fort McMurray, Fort Chipewyan, and area
Region 2 - High Level, Fort Vermilion, and area
Region 3 - Fairview, Peace River, and area
Region 4 - Grande Prairie, Valleyview, and area
Region 5 - Grande Cache, Whitecourt, Swan Hills, Fox Creek, and area
Region 6 - Grouard, High Prairie, East Prairie, Slave Lake, and area
Region 7 - Athabasca, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Cold Lake, and area

PROGRAM FUNDING

The overall funding of literacy services is insufficient. In addition to the VTP concerns above, Adult Basic Education programs also express concern over the instability of their funding. The *ad hoc* nature of the funds makes long range planning impossible and impairs short term planning. Instructor continuity is threatened. ABE providers question the commitment to literacy at both the institutional and government levels.

There is also a need for an expansion of services. Many programs have wait lists and there are still some unserviced and underserviced communities. The research has shown that the VTP and ABE approaches to literacy appeal to different learners. A variety of literacy programming, such as part time ABE courses, should be available.

PREVENTION

A review of the statistics and survey data brought out some very surprising trends: fully 9% of those in the 15 - 24 age group have less than Grade 9 education. The provincial average is 4%. A similar find in the student profiles shows that 47% of all of the learners in all three program types are under 24 years of age; 54% of the students in ABE classes are under 24 years. Clearly a large percentage of our youth is lacking in the most basic of education. The Southam study suggests that more illiterates are being added every year due to immigration policies and a flawed education system.

Illiteracy may never be completely eradicated but there are some steps that can slow it – especially among our youth.

ILLITERACY AND NATIVES

Although the Census data could not identify the percentage of native people with less than Grade 9 education the trends are clear that regional illiteracy rates increased proportionally with an increase in the percentage of natives. Indications from literacy workers and government officials support the feeling that illiteracy rates among native people are significantly higher.

Some of the more isolated native communities have no access to local literacy programs and services, such as Tall Cree, Fox Lake and Jean D'or Prairie.

Native reserves are caught in a jurisdictional vacuum between the provincial and federal governments that affect the provision of literacy programs. The provincial government doesn't fund any educational programming on reserves. Of the two federal departments that can fund, however, Employment and Immigration doesn't sponsor students with less than Grade 8 education, which is the *majority* of literacy learners, and Indian and Northern Affairs has a very limited budget. Natives on reserves have no other regular funding sources open to them. There is definitely a need to address this issue and arrive at a solution.

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

Literacy training in the north is available in a classroom setting or a one-on-one tutor basis. Yet the majority of people who are illiterate will not take advantage of either option.

Literacy programs must be innovative and creative in trying to address the problem and identify solutions. Work place literacy is a new concept that is presently in the developmental stage; Alberta Career Development and Employment has recently completed a discussion paper and is studying its viability. It is clear that many individuals who are illiterate are employed. It is also known that people will be more likely to take advantage of training opportunities if they are directly relevant to their lives. Work place literacy may be the answer. More research and perhaps the undertaking of a pilot project could provide evidence of the feasibility of work place literacy or other innovative approaches.

NOTE:

An example of workplace literacy projects is Keyano College's Community and Instructional Support Services Division Literacy Package for Syncrude Canada. Using company materials, a package for training Syncrude supervisors in the area of higher level reading comprehension skills was developed; an instructor is presently being hired to teach this course.

SUMMARY

Eight issues affecting northern literacy have been identified through the research:

- Literacy awareness
- Targeting literacy learners
- Learner support
- Volunteer Tutor Project support
- Program funding
- Prevention
- Illiteracy and natives
- Innovative approaches

These issues will form the basis of discussion for two workshops in northern Alberta. Strategies will be developed to address them and any other issues that arise. The results of the workshops will be used to draft a Northern Alberta Development Council *Position Paper on Adult Literacy in Northern Alberta.* The position paper will reflect the Council's view to addressing literacy and will be presented to the relevant government departments.

Illiteracy presents a real challenge for us all. But, as Diana Bruners says in her report that evaluates Fairview College's Northern Region Adult Literacy Program:[29]

> Fortunately, illiteracy is a handicap with a cure...
> a complete cure!

Opportunities must be available to provide northerners with a second chance to obtain a basic education.

APPENDIX A

An Illiteracy Snapshot of Canada

Province	Estimated Illiterates	Literacy Students	Percent in Courses
British Columbia	360,000	2,600	below 1
Alberta	360,000	18,000	5
Sask./Man.	290,000	6,800	2
Ontario	1,600,000	30,000	2
Quebec	1,370,000	15,000	1
Maritimes	320,000	5,600	2
Newfoundland	180,000	325	below 1
TOTAL(rounded)	4,500,000	78,325	1.7

Source: As provided by
Alberta Advanced Education

APPENDIX B

Summary of Projects:

REGION	ABE	VTP	ESL
1	Fort McMurray • Janvier Fort Chipewyan	Fort McMurray Fort Chipewyan	Fort McMurray
2	High Level (2) • La Crete • Paddle Prairie • Assumption • Garden River • Meander River • Fox Lake Fort Vermilion • Blumenort • Buffalo Head Prairie		
3	Fairview • McLennan Peace River Peace River Correctional Centre	Fairview • Cleardale • Worsley • Hines Creek • Blue Sky • Whitelaw Peace River • Grimshaw • Berwyn • Manning • Guy • Nampa	Fairview
4	Grande Prairie • Hythe • Valleyview	Valleyview Grande Prairie • Bezanson • Debolt • La Glace • Sexsmith • Wembley • Hythe • Beaverlodge • Grande Cache • Spirit River	Grande Prairie (2)

REGION	ABE	VTP	ESL
5	Whitecourt • Swan Hills Grande Cache	Whitecourt • Blue Ridge Fox Creek • Little Smoky Swan Hills	Grand Cache
6	Slave Lake • Wabasca • Calling Lake • Flatbush • Trout Lake • Smith • Peerless Lake • Loon Lake • Cadotte Lake Grouard • Atikameg • Faust • Joussard • East Prairie • High Prairie • Gift Lake • Peavine • Kinuso	High Prairie • Joussard Slave Lake • Gift Lake • Calling Lake • Wabasca • Pine Ridge	
7	Lac La Biche (2) St. Paul Saddle Lake Goodfish Lake Cold Lake Reserve Fishing Lake Fort Kent Frog Lake Frog Lake Halfway House Elizabeth Settlement	Lac La Biche St. Paul • Elk Point • Fishing Lake • Frog Lake • Saddle Lake Athabasca Cold Lake/Grand Centre • Medley • First Nations Reserve Fort Kent • Kehiwen Reserve	Cold Lake Lac La Biche

Adult Literacy in Northern Alberta: A Statistical Overview
Bonnie Hutchinson Enterprises, March 1989

ABE - Adult Basic Education
VTP - Volunteer Tutor Project
ESL - English as a Second Language

APPENDIX C

MAP

APPENDIX D

GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR LITERACY PROGRAMS

Six government departments were contacted to determine the extent of provincial and federal support for literacy programs. The following is a report on the information obtained from each department.

1. ***Alberta Education***

Community and International Education Branch
Amelia J. Turnbull, Director

This department provides no literacy or Adult Basic Education (ABE) program support for northern Alberta. There are no English as a Second Language (ESL) programs for adults. The eight ABE programs receiving Alberta Education funding are:

Edmonton Public Schools
Thorncliff Community Schools - Edmonton
Calgary Separate Schools
Brooks School District
Taber School District
Lethbridge Community College
Medicine Hat Community College

(The Community Colleges run programs on behalf of the school district.)

Alberta Education has not expanded its support since the mid-1970's, primarily because of funding restrictions. The department is not aware of any requests for funding from programs other than those listed above. It is quite likely that other programs searching for financial support know that none is available through Alberta Education and so apply elsewhere—to the department of Advanced Education or the department of Career Development and Employment, for example.

To receive funding from Alberta Education, programs must be sponsored by a school board and classes must be taught by certified teachers. Alberta Education views ABE according to grade level criteria (Grades 1-9); the department also supports extension programs for adults at the high school level. Within these basic guidelines, individual programs are given a fair amount of autonomy.

Alberta Education maintains no central enrollment statistics. Funding is determined according to the particular enrollment of each program. Programs presently receive $5.25 per course enrollment hour ($5.25 for each student for each hour); this will be increased to $5.50 for the 1989/90 academic year.

There is no additional or special funding available from this department.

2. *Alberta Advanced Education*

Community Programs Branch
Keith Anderson, Senior Consultant

This department funds all of the volunteer tutor projects (VTP) in Alberta. There are currently 44 VTPs in Alberta, 18 of which are located in northern Alberta. Advanced Education will also fund *ad hoc* ESL courses at the rate of $16.00 per instructional hour, with a minimum of eight students.

To receive Advanced Education funding, VTPs and ESL courses must be sponsored by a Further Education Council. Prior to submitting the application for funding, the Further Education Council must pass a formal motion to sponsor the VTP or ESL course. No funds are sent directly to the VTP/ESL course. Programs must have a hosting authority to administer the funds; this hosting authority may or may not be the Further Education Council, since FECs may also need hosting authorities.

Advanced Education will not supply funds for credit courses or capital expenditures. Funding normally covers salaries, rent, learning materials, basic necessities and some professional development expenses.

There are no eligibility restrictions with regard to the students serviced by Advanced Education sponsored programs. Need is determined by the individual coordinators. In general, VTPs reject the statistical definition of illiteracy (less than Grade 9) in favor of the relative definition. Maximum program capacity, or number of seats available, is also determined by each individual coordinator.

Programs are funded for a year, but usually follow the academic calendar. The basic rate is $11,000 to $16,000 per year.

Advanced Education supports several special services in addition to the volunteer tutor projects. These include the **Literacy Coordinators of Alberta** (LCA) ($30,000 per year), and the LCA's special coordinator professional development project, the **Resource People Project** ($56,000 cost-shared with the federal department of the Secretary of State on a 50/50 basis). There is also some *ad hoc* funding available to Further Education Councils to undertake needs assessment projects to determine if there is a need for a VTP in their area. The amount of *ad hoc* funding usually awarded is between $3,000 and $4,000.

The volunteer tutor program has grown from 23 programs in 1986 to 50 programs in 1989. Advanced Education has chosen to support all literacy projects in Alberta to ensure equal access to the service, rather than concentrating on only a few projects. This does guarantee equal geographical access, but also means that few programs have the amount of financial assistance required to service their specific regions adequately. Hence, the need, or demand, still exceeds the supply. Community Programs is aware of this situation and continues to press for an increase in its own budget, so that it may increase the VTP budget.

Provincially Administered Institutions
Management Support
Beth Cunningham, Director

This branch of Alberta Advanced Education provides the base funding, covering the ongoing operating costs, for Alberta Vocational Centres. About 50% of academic upgrading offered by AVCs is at the ABE level.

Until 1989, there were three AVCs in Northern Alberta: AVC Lac La Biche, AVC Grouard and CVC (Community Vocational Centre) Slave Lake. In January, 1989, AVC Grouard and CVC Slave Lake amalgamated to become AVC Lesser Slave Lake.

To receive funding, programs must receive prior approval according to a Program Approval Policy, which covers areas such as the numbers allowed or required for enrollment, the curriculum, the target or priority group being served and the 'type' of graduate produced (i.e., the program must enhance the employability of its students, given current and local labour market conditions). The individual AVCs have some flexibility with regard to the specific courses offered within their ABE programs. They may include life skills and basic job readiness and career counselling as well as the academic areas. The base grant system is similar to that in the colleges and universities program.

The department of Advanced Education shares the costs of academic upgrading with the Canadian departments of Employment and Immigration and Indian and Northern Affairs, as well as the Alberta department of Career Development and Employment, primarily through a seat purchase system.

For the 1987/88 academic year, Advanced Education spent $20,646,798 on academic upgrading in the province of Alberta; of this, $8,580,527 went to Northern Alberta institutions.

Advanced Education defines academic upgrading as "a process intended to provide adults with the basic skills necessary to learn and function as self-directed and socially responsible adults. This process has evolved from a recognition of the needs, characteristics and responsibilities of adult learners."

ABE programs support an adult clientele who are identified as disadvantaged or have special needs and are therefore unable to take advantage of employment, education or societal opportunities. Learners do not have to be unemployed, but must be able to attend school on a full-time basis. Consequently, at least 90% are unemployed. Learners are counselled and assessed for placement according to their education and employment goals. Counselling seeks to ensure a "realistic" goal, taking into account the learner's financial and family constraints, education and employment background, personal talents and capabilities, as well as the labour market situation. Few basic literacy students (less than a Grade 4 level) can expect to achieve Grade 12. In fact, the majority of students enrolled in ABE in the vocational centres enter with functional skills at the grades 6-9 level.

Some programs operate on a continuous intake basis and program duration varies considerably from student to student and from program to program. Most learners take about 80 weeks of courses (four 20-week semesters), over a period of 2 to 2 1/2 years.

In the 1987/88 academic year, 13,439 Alberta adults were enrolled in ABE programs, 1,820 of whom took programming in northern communities.

The department of Advanced Education representative noted that the need for adult basic education services far outweighs the present supply, despite the fact that AVC waiting lists are not very long. (Many people do not get to the waiting list stage.) She suggested that a large percentage of potential learners cannot afford to go to school full-time and that part-time courses might better serve many of the needs of the "illiterate" or "undereducated" population.

3. ***Alberta Career Development and Employment***

Alberta Vocational Training Program
Syl Villett, Director

The Alberta department of Career Development and Employment, through the Alberta Vocational Training Program, funds adult basic education courses and also financially assists adult basic education students.

AVT funding for ABE programs is provided on an *ad hoc* basis. Programs must be less than year in duration. If the course is sponsored by an AVC and is not covered by Advanced Education base funding, AVT will fund the entire course. If the course is part of a federally sponsored program, or was initiated federally, AVT will share the cost with the federal department of Employment and Immigration on a 50/50 basis. AVT will also sponsor programs offered through private institutions, industry and other organizations, as long as the funding criteria is met and the courses are thought to be advantageous.

AVT sponsored programs must serve those who are disadvantaged and are therefore unable to take advantage of the education, employment and societal opportunities available. A primary goal is the enhancement of student employability. Academic upgrading and short-term job training are the top two priorities of the AVT Career Development program. The other priorities are job re-training, occupational language training, meeting the needs of other government departments and providing short-term, part-time business skills development.

A statistical breakdown of the number of programs funded in northern Alberta was not available from the Career Development and Employment representative.

To receive a training allowance and tuition support, AVT sponsored students must be unemployed, unskilled, 18 years of age or older, Alberta residents, ineligible for federal assistance, in financial need and referred to the program by a vocational counsellor. The amount of the allowance varies according to the circumstances of each student, with family circumstances the primary determining factor.

All eligible applications for student assistance are accepted. No student is refused support due to insufficient AVT funds. About half of the program and course applications are accepted. Most of the rejected applications meet the eligibility criteria, but do not receive high priority status. Presumably, program funds are more limited than student assistance funds.

Accurate enrollment and funding statistics were not available. About 30,000 students are supported by, or enrolled in, the AVT program in the province as a whole for programs and student support; about 10% of these reside in northern communities. The current Alberta budget is approximately $40,000,000; about 10% of that goes to the northern region. (Direct student financing for Alberta is $21,000,000; again, 10% of that goes to support northern learners.)

The Career Development and Employment representative did not speculate as to the overall need for literacy and adult basic education services in northern Alberta. The department may initiate courses, but generally does not; much of the AVT program is administered through local Career Centres and Career Development Centres.

4. ***Canada Employment and Immigration***

Mark Zeliger, Employment Consultant

The federal department of Employment and Immigration funds ABE programs through the purchase of program seats and also supports students, primarily through the Unemployment Insurance program.

Because Canada Employment purchases seats from the province of Alberta, federal funding criteria is at least partially determined by Alberta funding criteria. The provincial departments involved are the department of Advanced Education and the department of Career Development and Employment. They generally approach Canada Employment with the offer to sell seats.

Canada Employment also has some funding restrictions in addition to provincial funding criteria. The federal department will not sponsor a seat under the Grade 8 level. Students must be labour market destined; university is not an acceptable objective. Programs receiving Canada Employment support must enhance the employability of the students and must also be required by the local industrial base.

It was reported that Canada Employment generally assists 46 ongoing academic upgrading/adult basic education programs in Northern Alberta; of these, 10 are Native outreach programs. Of an Alberta budget of $2,200,000, about $220,000 goes to northern communities.

To receive financial assistance and tuition support, students must be unemployed and referred by a counsellor. They must require academic upgrading to enhance their employability. Students are either supported through the Unemployment Insurance program or through a separate training allowance program. U.I. support is determined according to benefit entitlement, while the amount of the training allowance will vary according to the individual circumstances of each student. In general, the U.I. benefit is the higher of the two, though students with low U.I. benefits can receive supplemental financing.

Approximately 220 northern Alberta ABE learners are sponsored by the department of Canada Employment and Immigration.

Canada Employment and Immigration also purchases English as a Second Language program seats and financially assists ESL students. Students are permitted to take up to 52 weeks of ESL instruction. They may be refugees, immigrants or Canadian-born non-English speakers. Family or church-sponsored refugees are not normally eligible for government assistance; it is assumed that the private sponsor will finance language training. Government-sponsored refugees usually are placed in ESL courses shortly after their arrival in Canada. Other ESL students receive federal financial assistance according to the same criteria as those ABE students receiving federal financial assistance.

Approximately 11 Northern Alberta ESL learners are sponsored by the department of Canada Employment and Immigration. Information on the number of seats purchased was not available. The criteria and methodology is similar to that involved in the ABE program.

The Canada Employment and Immigration departmental representative suggested that the overall need for literacy assistance is not being filled, primarily because Canada Employment will not help anyone needing services below the Grade 8 level.

In addition to the support just outlined, Canada Employment and Immigration funds two other programs related to literacy and ESL services. Literacy Corps is designed as a tutor program matching young tutors with young learners (both must be under 25). It is generally accessed by volunteer tutor projects, which are given funds according to the number of young people registered in the project. Literacy Corps funds are very limited.

The Settlement Language Training Program offers paid one-to-one tutoring and/or ESL classes to immigrants and refugees who are not active in the workforce and are unable to take advantage of mainstream ESL programs. The students are usually young women with small children at home or older retired people. SLTP funds are extremely limited and are very *ad hoc*. The program is still in the "pilot project" stage; individual projects receive assistance in five-month allotments per program year. The Program can be accessed by a VTP or a Further Education Council. No SLTP funds were known to have been allocated to a northern project in 1988.

5. *Indian and Northern Affairs - Canada*

Economic and Employment Development

Ralph Bouvette, Acting Manager

Leona Shirt, Development Officer

Through the Occupational Skills Training Program, the department of Indian and Northern Affairs has the mandate to provide any kind of literacy and adult basic education service to registered treaty Indians in Alberta. Effective April, 1989, the OST Program will be administered by Indian bands rather than the department of Indian and Northern Affairs. This is part of the overall trend towards Native self-administration, known as devolution. To prepare for this, the department sponsored a workshop at the end of March; proceedings from the workshop were not available at the time this report was being written.

To participate in the OST Program, students must be treaty Indians over 16 years of age. The Program is primarily designed to assist the unemployed, but will also assist underemployed people seeking help. There are no grade achievement restrictions.

At present, there are no organized Native programs offered on reserves. The literacy and ABE assistance is limited to that provided through the AVCs, including a small number of AVC Native outreach programs. Student financial assistance is provided by the department of Indian and Northern Affairs only when students do not qualify for other training allowance programs.

According to the representatives, there are very few Natives who do not need literacy assistance of some kind. About 60 percent of those who receive Indian Affairs assistance are single mothers in their late teens or early twenties, often with several dependents. Statistics on the actual numbers were not available.

The department of Indian and Northern Affairs spends about $1,500,000 on literacy-related services in Alberta; about $900,000 of that goes to the northern communities. The representatives estimate that $10,000,000 a year for ten years is needed to bring the Native illiteracy rate up to the illiteracy rate in the non-Native community.

6. Secretary of State - Canada

Literacy Program
Frances Adams, Social Development Officer

Secretary of State is jurisdictionally prohibited from providing funding to cover the ongoing operating costs of literacy, ABE or ESL projects. However, Secretary of State's "justice mandate" (to support programs that enhance the equality of Canadians or serve an advocacy function for disadvantaged Canadians) allows for the department's involvement in literacy. This involvement is limited to special projects, which is considered to be indirect support to literacy programs.

Secretary of State funds projects that will develop learning materials, do research, conduct information and/or public awareness campaigns, and provide some professional development services to coordinators.

During the 1988-92 five year period, Secretary of State will administer $110,000,000 federal/provincial cost-shared literacy funds. Of this, 45% is directed towards special projects, 45% is directed towards the voluntary sector (organizations like the Alberta Association for Adult Literacy, which received $35,000 for 1988), and 10% to the national secretariat in Ottawa.

The province of Alberta received $500,000 of this amount for the 1988/89 fiscal year and will receive $1,000,000 for each of the following four fiscal years. The current fiscal year will see $141,663 spent on northern Alberta projects. These include a Community Outreach Program in Slave Lake, a Lakeland College Tutor Rally and Community Tutor Trainer Project, a Fairview College Literacy Workshop and an Anthology of Student Writings produced by Fairview College. Northern volunteer tutor projects will also benefit from the Secretary of State financed Resource People Project, which assists with the training and professional development of coordinators on a regional basis, and the Language and Literacy Resource Service, which is being developed to provide information, coordination, learning materials and support to literacy and ESL providers throughout the province.

Secretary of State accepted half of the 22 funding applications submitted for the current fiscal year. Those rejected primarily met eligibility requirements but were not high priority projects. To date, Secretary of State has not actively solicited applications, but is looking to become involved in assisting Native programming.

APPENDIX E

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

The following participated in the telephone survey of literacy projects.

Adult Basic Education Projects

1. Academic Upgrading
   Fairview College
   Contact: Dale Yerxa
2. Academic Upgrading
   Yellowhead Consortium (Grande Cache)
   Contact: Karen Exchange
3. Academic Upgrading
   Grande Prairie Regional College
   Contact: Pam Smith
4. Academic Upgrading
   AVC Grouard
   Contact: Kim Barker-Kay
5. Academic Upgrading
   Peace River Consortium/Fairview College
   Contact: Buff Smith
6. Academic Upgrading
   Slave Lake CVC
   Contact: Barb Heise; Cate Gongas
7. Academic Upgrading
   Lac La Biche St. Paul AVC
   Lac La Biche AVC Native Outreach:
   - Elizabeth Settlement
   - Fishing Lake
   - Fort Kent
   - Frog Lake
   - Frog Lake Halfway House
   - Goodfish Lake
   - Saddle Lake
   - Cold Lake Reserve

   Contact Person: Roy Salsbury

8. Adult Upgrading
   Keyano College, Fort McMurray
   Contact Person: Peter Rudiak

9. Academic Upgrading
   Keyano College, Fort Chipewyan
   Contact Person: Jeanne McIntyre

10. Academic Upgrading (levels 100 and 200)
    AVC Lac La Biche
    Contact: Uday Chavan

11. Academic Upgrading (level 300)
    AVC Lac La Biche
    Contact: Sharon Behnke

12. Academic Upgrading
    Peace River Correctional Centre
    Contact: Garrie Fleet

13. Academic Upgrading
    Whitecourt - Pembina Consortium
    Contact: Jean Saunders

14. Academic Upgrading
    High Level/Fairview College
    Contact: Abe Jenzen

15. Reading and Writing Tutor Project (classified as ABE)
    High Level/Fairview College
    Contact: Rick Cookson-Hills

16. Fort Vermilion Tutor Project (classified as ABE)
    Fort Vermilion/Fairview College
    Contact: Lorna Bell

Volunteer Tutor Projects

1. Adult Education Centre, Peace River
   Contact: Grace Luck
2. Second Chance Adult Tutoring Project, Fairview
   Contact: Linda Hall
3. Fox Creek Literacy Project
   Contact: Debbie Ashmore
4. Community Reading Projects - Slave Lake
   Contact: Karen Christiansen
5. The Reading Network, Grande Prairie
   Contact: Wenda Housego
6. Prairie River Regional Literacy Project, High Prairie
   Contact: Audrey Shapka
7. W.A.R. (Write and Read) Through Literacy, Swan Hills
   Contact: Cheryl Morrow
8. Valleyview Adult Literacy for Individual Development
   Contact: Judy Smith
9. LEARN - Lakeland College - Cold Lake/Grand Centre
   Contact: Connie McLeod
10. Reaching Out, Fort Chipewyan
    Contact: Freda Fraser
11. LEARN - Lakeland College - Fort Kent
    Contact: Connie McLeod
12. Write Break, Fort McMurray
    Contact: Nancy Steel
13. Program for Adult Literacy, Lac La Biche
    Contact: Roy Middleton
14. LEARN - Lakeland College - St. Paul
    Contact: Connie McLeod
15. Athabasca Adult Basic Literacy Project
    Contact: Kathy Picket
16. Write Soon Literacy Project - Whitecourt
    Contact: Marion Jenkins

English As A Second Language Projects

1. Keyano College, Fort McMurray
   Contact: Peter Rudiak
2. Lakeland College, Cold Lake
   Contact: Connie McLeod
3. Fairview College, Fairview
   Contact: Dianne McDonald
4. Grande Cache Further Education Council
   Contact: Jo Shariow
5. Grande Prairie Regional College, Grande Prairie
   Contact: Kevin Anstey
6. AVC Lac La Biche
   Contact: Uday Chavan

APPENDIX F

Survey Questionnaire

Northern Alberta Development Council
A Survey of Community Literacy Projects in Northern Alberta
QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is being distributed to adult literacy and English as a Second Language projects in Northern Alberta, to help us gain a more precise understanding of:

- literacy needs and services, and
- the clients of literacy projects in Northern Alberta.

The information will help us put forward recommendations as to how we can best address literacy needs of Northern Alberta people.

During the week ending February 24, Margaret Holliston of Bonnie Hutchinson Enterprises Inc. will contact you to ask for the enclosed information about your project.

Thanks for co-operating.

Arlene Reid
Senior Northern Development Officer
Northern Alberta Development Council

* * * * * *

LITERACY PROJECT INFORMATION

NAME OF PROJECT _____

LOCATION _____

Contact person_____ Position _____

Phone _____

PART I: BACKGROUND ABOUT YOUR PROJECT

We'd like to know more about your project and the services it offers. Could you please tell us:

1. How long has your project been in existence? Year it started _____.

2. What is your sponsor or affiliate organization?

   _____

3. Has this organization been your sponsor since the project's beginning?
   a. ___ yes b. ___ no

   c. (If "no"): What other organization(s) has(have) been sponsors for your project?

   _____

4. Before your project started, who identified the need for the project?

5. What is the geographic area served by your project?

6. PERSONNEL
   a. How many paid staff people do you have?
      i. Number of full-time paid staff _____
      ii. Number of part-time paid staff _____
      iii. For each part-time staff position, number of hours of work per week:

      Number of positions | Number of hours

      _____ at _____ hours per week
      _____ at _____ hours per week
      _____ at _____ hours per week

   b. How many volunteers does your project have?

   c. How many tutors or instructors does your project have?
      i. ____Number of one-to-one tutors
      ii. ____Number of group instructors

7. SERVICES AND NUMBER OF CLIENTS

Please tell us the type of service you offer, the number of clients, the amount of literacy education provided, and the number of people waiting to be served:

TYPE OF SERVICE (check those you offer)	NUMBER OF CLIENTS ENROLLED	DROP-OUT RATE (%)	AVERAGE LENGTH OF PROGRAM (NUMBER OF WEEKS)	AVERAGE HOURS PER WEEK OF LITERACY PROGRAM	NUMBER OF CLIENTS WAITING FOR SERVICE (as of today)	* MAXIMUM PROGRAM CAPACITY
a. _____ one-to-one tutoring	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
b. _____ part-time institutional literacy course	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
c. _____ full-time adult basic education classes	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
d. _____ English as a Second Language	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
e. _____ other (please specify)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

* Maximum program capacity: What is the maximum number of clients you can serve given your present financial, material and human resources?

8. ATTRACTING CLIENTS

How do clients find out about your project? Please give the approximate number of current clients who have come to your program by way of the following:

NUMBER OF CLIENTS	METHOD OF ATTRACTING CLIENTS
a. _____	Word of mouth
b. _____	Newspaper/T.V./radio advertising/special presentations
c. _____	Referred by agencies (e.g. Social Services, Employment and Immigration Canada, etc.)
d. _____	Other (please specify) _____

PART II: CLIENT INFORMATION

We'd like to know more about the people who use your services. Please be as accurate as possible. If you are not sure of some of the information, please estimate as closely as you can. If you have absolutely no way of making an educated guess, please mark "don't know."

1. TOTAL NUMBER OF CLIENTS

   a. _____ During the calendar year 1988 (or the most recent 12-month period for which you have statistics), what was the total number of individuals who were registered with your project?

   Please use this total number when completing questions 2, 3, 6, 7, 8 and 9 below. (That is, the sum of the numbers you provide in each question should add up to this total number.)

   b. _____ During 1988 (or the most recent 12-month period for which you have statistics), what was the total number of individuals who were on a waiting list for a literacy program?

2. GENDER

   How many of your total clients were:

   a. _____ male

   b. _____ female

3. AGE

   How many of your clients were in each of these age groups?

   a. _____ 14 and under

   b. _____ 15 to 24

   c. _____ 25 to 44

   d. _____ 45 to 64

   e. _____ 65 and over

4. ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

   _____ How many of your clients were English as a Second Language students?

5. SPECIAL NEEDS

Please indicate any special needs your clients may have (for example, a disability of some sort)

	NUMBER OF CLIENTS	TYPE OF SPECIAL NEED
a.	_____	_____
b.	_____	_____
c.	_____	_____
d.	_____	_____

6. LINGUISTIC ORIGIN

How many of your clients have the following linguistic backgrounds?

a. _____ English
b. _____ French
c. _____ Native North American
d. _____ Central/South American
e. _____ Asian (Vietnamese, Indian, Chinese, etc.)
f. _____ European/Scandinavian
g. _____ Other (please specify) _____
h. _____ Don't know

7. EDUCATION LEVEL

How many of your clients had the following education levels when they registered for your project?

a. _____ less than Grade 1
b. _____ Grade 1 to Grade 5
c. _____ Grade 6 to Grade 8
d. _____ Grade 9 to 12
e. _____ High school diploma
f. _____ Trade certificate or diploma
g. _____ University, no degree
h. _____ University degree
i. _____ Don't know

8. EMPLOYMENT STATUS

How many of your clients fall into the following categories of employment status?

a. _____ unemployed
b. _____ employed: managerial/professional
c. _____ employed: clerical
d. _____ employed: sales or service
e. _____ employed: technical or trade
f. _____ employed: unskilled
g. _____ student (please indicate their occupations just prior to becoming a student) _____
h. _____ homemaker
i. _____ other (please specify) _____
j. _____ don't know

9. DISTANCE FROM YOUR PROJECT

How far must your clients travel to receive literacy training? Please state the number of clients who must travel the following distances:

a. _____ 0 to 5 miles
b. _____ 5 to 20 miles
c. _____ 21 to 40 miles
d. _____ 41 to 60 miles
e. _____ more than 60 miles
f. _____ don't know

PART III: FUNDING INFORMATION

1. BUDGET

   $_____ What is your total annual budget for 1988 (or the most recent 12-month financial year)?

2. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

   Has your project grown since it was first started? Please provide us with a historic perspective by completing the following information (as much as you can):

YEAR	NUMBER OF STUDENTS REGISTERED	NUMBER OF STUDENTS ON WAITING LIST	TOTAL FUNDS FROM NON-GOVERNMENT SOURCES	TOTAL FUNDS FROM GOVERNMENT SOURCES
1988	_____	_____	$_____	$_____
1987	_____	_____	$_____	$_____
1986	_____	_____	$_____	$_____
1985	_____	_____	$_____	$_____
1984	_____	_____	$_____	$_____
1983	_____	_____	$_____	$_____
1982	_____	_____	$_____	$_____
1981	_____	_____	$_____	$_____

3. FUNDING SOURCES

During 1988 (or your most recent 12-month financial year), how much did your project receive from each of the following funding sources?

a. $ _____ amount received from Alberta Advanced Education

b. $ _____ amount received from Alberta Career Development and Employment

c. $ _____ amount received from Alberta Education

d. $ _____ amount received from Canada Employment and Immigration

e. $ _____ amount received from Secretary of State

f. $ _____ amount received from Indian Affairs and Northern Development

g. $ _____ amount received from Northern Development Agreement

h. $ _____ amount received from non-government organizations outside your community

i. $ _____ amount received from individual and community donations

j. $ _____ amount received from tuition fees

k. $ _____ other sources (please specify) _____

4. TUITION FEES

$_____ What is your project's tuition fee (if any)?

5. SOURCES OF FUNDS FOR STUDENTS

How many of your clients receive the following types of financial assistance to take part in your project?

NUMBER OF CLIENTS

a. _____ receive no financial assistance

b. _____ receive training allowance (e.g. from Alberta Career Development, Canada Employment and Immigration, etc.)

c. _____ other (please specify) _____

d. _____ don't know

PART IV: GENERAL HELPFUL INFORMATION

1. What do you feel your project needs in order to better serve your clients?

2. What do you feel is the biggest obstacle preventing a more effective service?

3. What do you feel is the greatest support or strength your project has, in offering literacy services?

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